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AN
(MELBOURNE)
MEMBER

MEMOIRS

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM

SECOND

VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

BY

W. M. TORRENS, M.P.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MEMOIRS

OF

VISCOUNT MELBOURNE.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

Secession of Stanley and Graham—Mitigated Coercion Bill—Resignation of Earl Grey—Designs of Coalition—Melbourne Premier—Policy of Conciliation.

With the overwhelming majority of the 30th of April against a dissolution of the Union, the triumphs of the Grey administration came to an end. They had been many and signal, the firstfruits of an influence almost unbounded which had been won by the achievement of Reform, and the exercise of which seemed to be irresistible, while those who mainly contributed to that achievement held together. But the time had come when this cohesion was to cease, and the power it gave to melt away. In home, foreign, and colonial affairs the policy of the Government had been reconstructive and successful; in those of Ireland alone it was unfortunately sterile and abortive, because vainly antagonistic to national feeling. Provoking anarchic schemes, and paralysed in turn by their agitation, it was driven to resort to measures of exclusion and repression which could not permanently be maintained or defended. The best men in and out of office grew sick and ashamed of the plight in which Ireland lay; and although, without exception, they helped to swell the majority against Repeal, they made up their minds thenceforth to break with the policy of mere resistance, and if the edifice of empire was to be maintained

that its western bulwarks should, without more waste of time, be underpinned with broad and solid corner-stones of justice. Catholic Emancipation must no longer be an empty name and mocking unreality. Church property, which had been taken by force from its native owners and conferred by force on the conquering sect, who formed but a tenth of the community, must be subjected at least to contribution for the general purposes of education; and the scandal must cease of collecting tithes by the aid of lancers and dragoons; while public meetings to protest and petition were interdicted by law.

Althorp, who sympathised at heart with a growing desire of his supporters for a remedial change of policy, told the Cabinet that he could not resist successfully in debate the reappropriation of surplus ecclesiastical funds; and Russell told the House of Commons that, in or out of place, he should vote for the adoption of that principle. Stanley, Graham, Richmond and Ripon held the title of the Anglican establishment to all church property in Ireland to be indefeasible; and failing to enforce their view in council, on the 27th of May, resigned. Their places were filled up by the promotion of Spring Rice, Lord Auckland, the Marquis Conyngham, and Poulett Thomson. The administration, thus modified, held together for a few weeks longer; but on the question involved in the renewal of the Coercion Act it was doomed to founder. Althorp and four of his colleagues were for abating materially the exceptional rigour of its enactments. Mr. Littleton had privately told O'Connell that the Viceroy and he were for omitting the political clauses, and that the bill would be brought in without them; whereupon the Repeal candidate for Wexford was induced to withdraw in favour of the Whig; and an address to the Radicals of England denouncing the Prime Minister, which was actually in type, was withheld by O'Connell. Meanwhile the unaltered act was brought before the Cabinet by the Premier, who cited a despatch of Lord Wellesley declaring it to be indispensable. But a subsequent letter from him,

undertaking to govern Ireland without the clauses against political assemblages in the renewed Coercion Act, was received on the 23rd of June.* When this was read in the Cabinet, Lord John observed that it looked like an answer to a question, rather than the spontaneous offer of the Viceroy. And so it turned out, Brougham being the author of the suggested change. The oft-tried patience of the veteran chief on this discovery gave way. He said afterwards with warmth, that had he been a younger man, he would have turned out the Chancellor and gone on as he might very well have done; but at seventy he did not feel himself equal to the effort or prepared for the consequences of such a step. While he still hesitated, the disclosure by O'Connell of the facts communicated to him by Mr. Littleton led to Lord Althorp's resignation, and Grey sent it with his own to the King. At a meeting of the Cabinet next day, the outgoing Premier handed Melbourne a sealed letter, of which he had undertaken to be the bearer from his Majesty, requiring his immediate attendance, and advice on the existing state of affairs.† No one was more surprised than the Home Secretary, who neither anticipated or approved of the change, and who, after he had accepted the command to reconstitute the administration, doubted seriously whether it was possible for him do so, and whether, for his own sake, it was desirable that he should even try. All his habitual love of leisure, and hatred of trouble about things that did not interest him, strove to beguile him from the task. He was past the prime of life, his home was desolate, and his consolations lay in books and the companionship of those he liked; to gossip with witty women and clever men whom he did not suspect of having any hidden purpose in their talk, was his chief delight. Versatile and whimsical in the drift of his own thoughts, it bored him to be obliged to think or talk in a groove. He had no object of personal,

* It is given, from an authentic copy made by Lord Wellesley's private secretary, in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1871, p. 299.

† Earl Russell's 'Recollections.'

family, or party ambition to make it worth his while. As to a thing inevitable, he had assented to the Reform Bill; and, once in for it, had gallantly and loyally helped to carry it through; but he had never affected enthusiasm at its success, and he did not disguise his aversion to further projects of organic change. With this disposition, and having had the highest compliment paid him by the sovereign, the question which he asked himself, and to which he got no intelligible answer, was—what was he to gain by taking the reins, where his only skill must be shown in slackening speed going down hill? Several times he thought he had made up his mind to have nothing to do with it; but he had not.

Whatever his anticipations may have been, there can be no doubt of the intention of the King, which was that he should seek to form a coalition with the Duke of Wellington. On the 9th of July a paper containing the royal views and desires, in the handwriting of Sir Herbert Taylor, was given to Melbourne by his Majesty. It did little more than reiterate the arguments already urged by William IV. for endeavouring to form a coalition strong enough to resist further legislative change; but in the critical position in which he was placed, a night's reflection satisfied the new minister that duty and policy alike required of him a prompt and explicit reply. In the afternoon of the 10th he transmitted therefore the following answer, which was awaited anxiously at the palace:—

Whitehall, July 10th, 1834.

Viscount Melbourne presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and feels secure that your Majesty will not doubt that Viscount Melbourne has considered the memorandum which your Majesty was graciously pleased to place in his hands yesterday with that attention which its importance demands, and with that solicitude which must be excited in every mind by the present very critical position of public affairs. Viscount Melbourne cannot be otherwise than deeply sensible of the confidence which

your Majesty reposes in him upon the present occasion, and of the too flattering terms in which the expression of that confidence is conveyed: and it is further his duty to acknowledge with gratitude the very clear and distinct manner in which your Majesty has condescended to put Viscount Melbourne in possession of the patriotic sentiments by which your Majesty is actuated, and of the enlarged views which your Majesty takes of the state and condition of the country. It appears to Viscount Melbourne to be very natural, that considering the difficulties and dangers from conflicting interests and opinions to which your Majesty's Government has been continually exposed, it should suggest itself to your Majesty's mind that it would be very desirable to avoid these perpetually recurring inconveniences and perils by an union in the service of the State, of all those who stand at the head and represent the respective parties in the country: and Viscount Melbourne is anxious to bear his humble testimony to that part of your Majesty's communication which states that, happily your Majesty can take this course without doing violence to any feeling. Viscount Melbourne is sincerely of opinion that no sovereign has ever shown himself more superior to prejudice, either personal or political, or more prepared to assent both to measures and arrangements, according as they should appear most conducive to the welfare and security of the country. With these views your Majesty calls upon Viscount Melbourne "to enter into communication with the leading individuals of parties, and to endeavour at this crisis to prevail upon them to afford their aid and co-operation towards the formation of an administration upon an enlarged basis combining the services of the most able and efficient members of each, and your Majesty further desires that Viscount Melbourne will communicate with the Duke of Wellington, with Sir Robert Peel, with Mr. Stanley, and with others of their respective parties, as well as with those who have hitherto acted with himself

and have otherwise supported the administration, and that he will endeavour to bring them together, and to establish a community of purpose." Your Majesty is graciously pleased to add, that "you do not disguise from yourself the difficulty of the task which your Majesty is desirous of imposing on Viscount Melbourne, nor the objections which Viscount Melbourne may possibly feel to take an active part in the endeavour to carry it into effect, but your Majesty trusts Viscount Melbourne will not refuse to become your confidential agent upon this critical occasion." Viscount Melbourne would indeed be greatly grieved, if he did not venture to hope that your Majesty is convinced of his devotion to your Majesty's person and service. He would be the most ungrateful of men, if for the sake of a master from whom, whilst he has had the honour to serve him, he has met with nothing but kindness and confidence, he were not prepared to make every exertion, and to run every risk provided a probable prospect were opened of promoting in the result the tranquillity of your Majesty's reign, and advancing the honour and interests of the Crown. It is therefore with great concern that, after a careful deliberation upon your Majesty's communication, Viscount Melbourne feels himself compelled to declare that the difficulty, which your Majesty anticipates, appears to Viscount Melbourne to be insurmountable, and that the objections to Viscount Melbourne's personally undertaking the task are so great as to render the successful termination of such an attempt utterly hopeless. The distinguished individuals enumerated by your Majesty, the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Stanley, have all and each of them recently expressed not only general want of confidence in your Majesty's Government, but the strongest objections, founded upon principle, to measures of great importance either introduced into Parliament, or adopted by virtue of your Majesty's prerogative: to the bill for the better collection of tithes in Ireland, and to

the commission for an inquiry into the state of religion in that country. Both these measures, particularly the last, Viscount Melbourne considers vital and essential in the present state of public feeling and opinion. Would it be then fair in Viscount Melbourne to offer to these distinguished individuals the appearance of a negotiation in which Viscount Melbourne would have everything to demand and nothing to concede? In his audience of your Majesty yesterday, Viscount Melbourne ventured to lay before your Majesty some of those general objections, which press forcibly upon his mind, to unions and coalitions of opposing parties. Viscount Melbourne will not repeat them now, further than to say that these objections appear to him to acquire additional strength and weight from the political temper and character of the present times. Viscount Melbourne, however, is most ready to admit that all general rules must be subject to exceptions arising from peculiar circumstances, and that there never was a moment which more imperiously required that men should not suffer themselves to be bound and shackled by preconceived opinions, but should act in that which appears to be the best mode of meeting the exigency of the immediate crisis. Viscount Melbourne again deeply laments the necessity which compels him to return to your Majesty's communication an answer which he fears will be unsatisfactory. Viscount Melbourne has no personal dislikes or objections; on the contrary, for all the individuals in question he entertains great respect, and for one of them, Mr. Stanley, with whom he has more intimate acquaintance, warm affection; but he does not perceive any ground upon which they can be brought together at present, nor any chance of such an accommodation as would be consistent with their own avowed principles, and satisfactory to the country.

There is no room to doubt that expectations had been held out by the Court to the leaders of Opposition that they would be invited to take part in the new arrangements; and

it was said and believed by many that it was specially with this view the Home Secretary had been called on to undertake the task of forming an administration. In the first impulse of disappointment, William IV. directed Melbourne to send a copy of his letter to the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, and Mr. Stanley. To his Grace he wrote accordingly:—

(*Secret*)

Whitehall, July 11th, 1834.

My Lord Duke,

His Majesty upon accepting the resignation of Earl Grey and Viscount Althorp on the 8th inst., commanded me to attend him at St. James's on the next day, the 9th, at half-past one, P.M., and in the audience with which his Majesty was then pleased to honour me, his Majesty made a communication of his wishes and opinions with respect to the formation of a ministry. To this communication I thought it my duty to return the reply of which the inclosed is a copy. I have this morning been directed by his Majesty to send this document to your Grace, as well as to Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Stanley, for the purpose of putting your Grace and those gentlemen in possession of his Majesty's feelings and opinions upon the present position of public affairs. The tenor and substance of my letter to his Majesty renders it almost unnecessary for me to add, that I wrote this communication solely in obedience to his Majesty's commands, and I have the honour to remain, &c.

The Duke on the evening of the same day replied:—

My Lord, London, July 11th, 1834.

I have had the honour of receiving your Lordship's letter of this day, together with the copy of the communication from your Lordship to the King which his Majesty desired should be sent to me. I beg that your Lordship will convey to his Majesty my grateful acknowledgments for his most gracious consideration. I do not understand that it is his Majesty's wish or intention that I should make any observations upon the paper sent to me by your Lordship.

Meanwhile Althorp at a private audience told the King that Grant, Abercromby, Ellice, and Spring Rice were of opinion that the contested clauses in the Coercion Bill should be omitted. This was with a view to obtain permission to disclose the names of the minority in the Cabinet to the House of Commons. Spring Rice told Lord Lansdowne that he much regretted the communication and the use that was intended to be made of it:—

He believed the reason Althorp mentioned names was a generous one; he thought his course would be a popular one, and he wished to include others in the same category with himself. This was just the reason why he should have preferred not to be so included. But the communication having been made, and concurrence given by his Majesty, there was no help for it. At night he received a very extraordinary letter from Brougham, charging him individually with the responsibility of destroying all their chances for the future. He replied that there was no effort which he was not ready and willing to make to avert the peril thus foreboded; but that without Althorp the best efforts to carry measures would be unavailing, as the House of Commons would run wild, and could not be retamed. He fully believed that all was broken up that till then existed; and that the commission given to Melbourne was to open a negotiation for a coalition of parties which at Lord Grey's on Sunday night seemed to be considered as inexpedient and impracticable. The King in his letter had spoken of a Government that should protect the country from the collision of parties. Even if Althorp were to continue Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Grey first minister, after what had happened and what had been disclosed, the clauses of the Coercion Bill respecting meetings were as much out of the question as if they had been already negatived. If the choice were between the bill with the clauses or no bill, he would assuredly vote for the bill; but other people in the House of Commons would not do so: and under any circumstances the success of the

clauses was wholly out of the question, even if recommended by Althorp himself. John Russell proposed as an alternative the abandonment of the bill itself; a mode of meeting one danger by encountering a less one, but one not free from responsibility, too rash except under a Government of a strong and popular character. He had endeavoured to warn Lyttelton. Folly, indiscretion, want of candour, &c., had grievously injured the Government.

> To die for treason is a common evil,
> But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.

When they parted at Berkeley Square he considered the administration at an end, and that they all only held *ad interim;* this only meaning the break-up of the Cabinet as then constituted, not as interfering with any effort which Melbourne might make at rebuilding a new edifice. After the House, he walked for an hour with Lord John, who strongly urged the duty and necessity which should be felt by all to save the country from the double danger of a Tory Cabinet that could not stand, and of a Radical movement that might be fatal, and he added that he had recommended Melbourne to communicate with Grant, Abercromby, and himself. He replied that he would willingly meet Melbourne, and had remained in full expectation that he would desire to see him, but this had not been the case up to the time he was writing.*

The intended interview took place the following day, when the new Premier asked Rice to retain the Colonial Department. But the letter derives additional value from the fact that when written, they previously had not met. All that it foreshadowed and advised being adopted by Melbourne, about whose elevation to the first place in the party, torn as it was by distracted counsels, there would seem to have tacitly been thorough accord. He had served with the Duke and Sir Robert Peel in 1828, and for both he

* Private and confidential. T. S. Rice to Lord Lansdowne, July 10th, 1834.

felt personally much esteem; but his experience of coalition had not been favourable even when majorities in Parliament could be made up by negotiation with a certain number of borough-owners; and now that the old machinery had been swept away, he did not believe in the possibility of carrying on the Government by any combination of mere executive skill or talent in debate. The ten-pound franchise was not yet two years old, and the sanguine hopes entertained out of doors of what the Liberal majority would accomplish, though damped by late events, were not extinguished. Theoretic scruple would not at any time have deterred him from combining with old associates whose constitutional opinions differed from his own less in substance than in name; and now that six of the leading members of the Cabinet of 1830 were gone he might have more easily been led to entertain the project of reuniting in council the colleagues of Canning. But with characteristic candour he told the sovereign that as matters then stood the thing was impossible; and to his most intimate adherents he expressed great unwillingness to undertake the onerous duty on any terms. That he was gratified at having had the offer, admits not of a doubt. But four years of office had served to disenchant him with the privilege of being pelted with applications for places and worried about innumerable details in which he took no interest. He could not be unconscious of his inferiority to Lord Grey in public estimation; and to have the appearance of being his nominee was not flattering to his self-esteem. If the hints and whispers of his well-known familiar Tom Young are to be believed, it needed many adjurations and remonstrances to keep him up to the mark* in the period of uncertainty which followed his first refusal of the royal offer. The truth is probably that, then as frequently before and after, his mind swayed to and fro between antagonistic impulses which he was too proud and too careless to conceal. He had great difficulty in persuading Althorp to resume the Exchequer, and this he deemed indispensable.

* Greville's Diary.

On Monday, the 14th of July, Lord Haddington asked if a Government had yet been formed. Melbourne replied that he had by command of the sovereign undertaken to form an administration; and that when his task was completed he should fully acquaint the House. No one could be more conscious than himself of his inadequacy to fill the responsible position to which he had been unexpectedly called; and nothing but a sense of the gratitude and duty he owed the sovereign could have induced him to make the attempt in a crisis so difficult. Without the assistance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the sanction of the late First Lord of the Treasury, he should not have ventured to do so; but with their support he felt bound to offer his humble service and counsel to the King, in order that a Government might be formed capable of conducting efficiently the affairs of the country. The House thereupon adjourned to Thursday, the 17th instant. At length all was settled, and on the 16th of July he kissed hands as First Lord of the Treasury.

The new Cabinet consisted of—

Viscount Melbourne .	*First Lord of the Treasury.*
Marquis of Lansdowne .	*Lord President.*
Earl of Mulgrave . .	*Privy Seal.*
Lord Brougham . .	*Chancellor.*
Viscount Althorp . .	*Chancellor of the Exchequer.*
Viscount Duncannon .	*Home Secretary.*
Viscount Palmerston .	*Foreign Affairs.*
Mr. Spring Rice . .	*Colonial Secretary.*
Mr. C. Grant . . .	*India Board.*
Earl of Auckland . .	*First Lord of the Admiralty.*
Lord J. Russell . . .	*Paymaster of the Forces.*
Lord Holland . . .	*Duchy of Lancaster.*
Mr. Poulett Thomson .	*Board of Trade.*
Viscount Howick . .	*Secretary at War.*
Mr. Abercromby . .	*Master of the Mint.*
Sir J. C. Hobhouse . .	*Woods and Forests.*

Out of the Cabinet were—

Marquis Wellesley . .	*Viceroy of Ireland.*
Mr. Littleton . . .	*Chief Secretary.*
Duke of Devonshire .	*Lord Chamberlain.*
Duke of Argyle . . .	*Lord Steward.*
Marquis Conyngham	*Postmaster-General.*
Sir J. Kemp	*Master-General of the Ordnance.*
Mr. Cutler Ferguson .	*Judge Advocate.*
Mr. F. Baring, Mr. C. Wood . .	*Secretaries of the Treasury.*

Brougham, who had never been able though always eager to assume the position of ministerial leader in the House of Lords, exulted in the retirement of Earl Grey. He regarded himself thenceforth as head of the administration; and with a view to impress that idea on the public, before anything was finally settled, volunteered the patriotic announcement from the Woolsack that he had not resigned; and that his sense of duty would not allow him to forsake his country or his King. His audience were more amused than amazed; whereupon he lectured their "laughing lordships" on their ignorance of the cares of office and their want of belief in the predominant wish of a Lord Chancellor to be relieved of the burthen; whereat the peers laughed again. Next day, when matters seemed to be settled, he gave out that he might have been Premier himself if he liked, but that he thought it better "Lamb should be at the Treasury;" and in point of fact that he had placed him there. He could not, indeed, persuade the press to take precisely this view; and when Melbourne with his quiet nonchalant air entered the House to take his seat as First Minister, he could not affect unconsciousness at the cordial greeting he received from troops of personal friends of all shades of opinion, including many who marvelled at his unlooked-for promotion, and some who doubted if he were not too indolent for the place. The Conservatives were well aware that he had declined to make their chiefs an offer of coalition; and as

affairs then looked it was difficult to conceive how else they were likely to return to power. But if a Whig Cabinet there must be, he was undoubtedly the man whom, of all others, they were glad to see at its head. It was only six years since he and Palmerston and Grant had served with them in office without contention or jar: the day might possibly come when some of their party would sit along with them again. The day did come, but not till after Melbourne passed away.

Had the House of Commons been called on to decide who should be Premier, Althorp beyond doubt would have been named. It was not because of his popularity, though that was unrivalled; nor because of his equanimity, though that was habitually unruffled; it was not for his skill in finance, for he had made more than one egregious error; and as a debater he had neither fluency, eloquence, or wit. His hold upon the confidence of those he led came of quite other qualities, unfortunately rare in political life; but of inestimable value in the leader of an anxious and often perplexed assembly. What he said he often said imperfectly, but everybody felt that he meant what he said, without juggle, finesse, or reserve; and that in forming as in expressing his judgment on every question, he was thinking of the subject, not of himself—of the public interest, not of his own. Of all the men in the Government, he was the only one who was believed to be sincerely anxious to quit office, and he was therefore the one of all others whom nobody wished to go. Melbourne, who knew his worth *intus et in cute*, made his resumption of the leadership an essential condition of his own acceptance of the first place of the Treasury; and the delay which arose in readjusting the administration was in part, at least, attributable to his extreme reluctance to remain. Whatever ambition he may have had was long since satisfied, and with the exception of the Ballot all the great measures had been carried in the advocacy of which he had been identified while in opposition. The wear and tear of the last three years and a

half had begun to tell upon his health; he had literally no personal motive to continue; and he would gladly have resumed the position of an independent member, in which he believed he could still serve his party. Over and over again, therefore, he refused; and it was only on being convinced that his obduracy meant loss of power and dignity by all the friends about whose feelings he cared, that he was induced to yield. Here is how the odds for the Premiership were counted from afar.

Macaulay had left England early in the spring, and reaching India at the commencement of the hot weather, had accompanied the Governor-General to Ootacamund, whence he wrote his impressions frankly to his old friend Spring Rice:—

Many thanks for the kindness of the expressions in your letter. I was indeed truly sorry to leave England without shaking you by the hand. But after all, partings are sad things, and I had quite as many of them to go through as I could well stand. What shall I find you when I come back? Whatever you choose, that is my firm opinion. The game is in your own hands, and if you are not Prime Minister, or very near it, when I return—which will be, I hope, before the end of 1839—I shall say that you have played the game ill. I am too far from the scene of action to offer any opinion or particular decisions on the details of the parliamentary warfare. But I think that I can judge pretty well, even in the midst of this wilderness, of the great political operations which are going on in England. And my judgment is this. The strongest party beyond all comparison in the empire is what I call the *centre gauche*, the party which goes farther than the majority of the present ministry, and yet stops short of the lengths to which Hume and Warburton go. That party is a match for all the other parties in the State together. It contains, I imagine, three-fourths of the constituent body. But it has no head. Lord Althorp with Stanley's abilities, or

Stanley with Lord Althorp's opinion and temper, would be the leader of that party, and consequently the most powerful man in the country. But Hawley's opinions are aristocratical, and his manners unpopular. Lord Althorp's talents are not eminent; and either of them may any day be translated to the House of Lords. I see no man among the Whigs so well qualified as yourself, by talents for business and talents for debate combined, to lead the House of Commons—or in other words, to rule the empire. Stick to the *Centre Gauche*. Gain their confidence, and you may do what you please. This is the game that I would have tried, if I had remained in England. It is a game which you can play, and which nobody now in the House of Commons can play but yourself. Our latest news from England comes down only to the 10th of April. I am quite with you about the pensions. Indeed, I think that to touch the pensions already granted would be downright robbery. But I own that the way in which you are dealing with the other great questions before you makes me very uneasy. Why must O'Connell have the credit of originating an amendment of a part of our jurisprudence so unpopular and so absurd as the libel law? And this when, to my certain knowledge, the Attorney-General had strongly pressed on the Cabinet the expediency of doing something on that subject. Why was Lord John Russell suffered to bring in so miserable, so contemptible a measure as the bill for dissenters' marriages? I have been laughing over it with Lord William Bentinck, and, familiar as we are with the wretched and unworkmanlike legislation of India, we both agreed that it was the worst constructed law that we ever fell in with. But I will have done with scolding, and indeed I must have done altogether, for the post is going out, and my letter will be at Madras but just in time to catch the S. coasters. I am much obliged to you for your letter to Sir John Franks; I will present it to him when I reach Calcutta. If now and then you can steal a little

time from parliamentary business and official business, write me a few lines, I shall be delighted to receive them, and above all delighted if they tell me that you and your family are well.*

Surprise was manifested on the announcement that Lord Duncannon was to be Home Secretary, and to be called up to the Peers. He would have been content to remain at the Woods and Forests, an office whose duties he liked, and which left him time enough for those he still more relished, connected with the management of party matters. Melbourne did not care about the taunt of adversaries, that one of his first acts was to make his brother-in-law Secretary of State; but in the then condition of the kingdom, he was anxious to be assured that from day to day he should really know everything of moment that took place, and that, without the formation of any new tie or the making of any new stipulation, there should be a safe and honourable medium of communication with the popular party in Ireland. The personal confidence of O'Connell in the good will, good sense, and good faith of Lord Duncannon was of old standing. They sometimes quarrelled about Irish affairs, but always made it up again, neither professing to be overborne by the other. All seemed now settled :- -

I forgot to mention this morning that the King wishes to have a council after the levée to-morrow, in order to swear in Cutler Ferguson. Will you take care that notice is given to him? I laid before the King in writing the substance of what was agreed upon yesterday evening. He seemed to approve much of Duncannon—not so much of Hobhouse, particularly of his being in the Cabinet. But upon the whole he seemed inclined to agree. He took the paper, and said he would send me an answer without delay. I stated to him what you desired, which he said was exactly the same as you had stated to him

* From Ootacamund, August 11th, 1834.

yourself, and which he much approved. He seems a good deal agitated and annoyed.*

The new Premier announced that it was not meant to proceed further with the Coercion Bill; but that another measure, omitting the clauses against political meetings, with which the Viceroy had undertaken to dispense, would be forthwith introduced. Without this modification of policy it would have been impossible to reconstitute the Government; and he had not thought it right on that account to leave his Majesty without a Cabinet. But if assemblages should again in Ireland menace the peace of the realm, ministers would at any inconvenience call Parliament together and ask for power that might be needful to maintain the authority of the Crown.

At the levée Sir J. Campbell noticed that the Chancellor was much disturbed in aspect, and asked Melbourne the reason:—

Have you not, he said, seen this morning's *Times*? Another *Broughamic*, hinting that he is out of his mind, exaggerating his peculiarities, vilipending his rhetoric, and above all, asserting that there are heavy and increasing arrears in the Court of Chancery. He takes these attacks most seriously to heart, and I may really say that they drive him mad. I am very uneasy about him, and I am very glad that the session is so near its end.

But if his colleagues would not give Brougham the lead, he was determined at all events to run ahead. A select committee of the Commons was still inquiring into taxes on newspapers, and he offered to give evidence before them. Lord Althorp had resisted the abolition of the duties on newspaper stamps and advertisements, on the ground that the revenue could not afford it, and the new Premier felt bound to sustain his views. All the more tempting was the opportunity to give radical testimony in favour of the change. Attended by his train-bearer and mace-

* To Lord Lansdowne, July 15th, 1834.

bearer, the Chancellor appeared in all the glory of his gold-embroidered robes before the committee, who rose to receive him, and uncovered while he continued to wear his cocked-hat in assertion of his privilege. Mr. Hume was of course delighted with the Caledonian courage thus displayed; and Spring Rice, who though no longer at the Treasury was watchful about making both ends meet, complained bitterly of the unfairness of this sort of outbidding. But Melbourne felt that he had quite enough on his hands without calling the Lord Keeper to account for what could not now be undone. There was little chance, he knew, of a hostile vote on the question in either House; and if in the following session the popularity-hunting Chancellor had to acquiesce in retaining the duties he called iniquitous, that was his affair. Another erratic proceeding in the same quarter was a suggestion to meet O'Connell halfway regarding the law of libel. Notwithstanding all that had happened in February and the supererogatory aid he had given to baffle the measure, he now proposed to give up the *ex-officio* power of filing criminal informations on behalf of the Crown. Sir J. Campbell complained to Althorp and Russell, but they bade him take comfort, as nothing material would come of such eccentricities. The climax was his suddenly laying on the table a bill to amend the jurisdiction of the House of Lords in the hearing of appeals and writs of error, the important details of which he subsequently undertook to expound in committee, but no part of which he had ever submitted to the Cabinet. It is even said that at the time they had not been drawn, and certain it is that they were never printed. The prorogation took place the following day, and as the Parliament was not destined ever to meet again, the audacious liberty thus taken with his colleagues, in whose collective name he had presented the dummy, passed without notice. But such things were not unobserved or forgotten by the new Premier. Nor did the *Times* allow them to be forgotten by the people. For fifteen years

the great journal had stood by him unwaveringly; but, vexed by the unyielding rigour of his economic theories in support of the new poor law, and scandalised at his inconsistency and indecorum, it at length gave him up, declaring that, "Lord Melbourne would soon find him out, as the honest men of the community were an over-match for the knaves."* Reviewing his course during the session, it said that for some months he had been "under morbid excitement, seldom evinced by those of his Majesty's subjects who are suffered to remain masters of their own actions." †

By the appointment in August of Sir George Grey as Colonial Under-Secretary of State a further pledge was given of the desire to secure efficiency of administration, and of the continuance of the views and principles of policy which had won public confidence during the late Premier's term of office.

The egregious airs of ascendency which the Chancellor assumed could not but attract notice. H. B. amusingly depicted the position in a sketch of the "Wolf and the Lamb," in which the former had placed himself a little higher up the stream, while the latter, undisturbed by his presence, watched him quietly from the opposite bank. Equally diverting was an illustration from Sterne, with an apology for making free with the species of the bewildered maiden's pet; and which represented Brougham, in the character of Maria, in pensive attitude and with drooping locks, fondling not a goat, but a woolly wearer of the blue ribbon. Melbourne laughed heartily at these and other harmless jests upon his name; but the King showed daily more vexation at the delusion being kept up in the popular mind that the individual he most detested was his chief councillor. Entire misconception of how he really stood with his Majesty can alone account for the rhetorical pranks played soon afterwards in Scotland by the Keeper of the Great Seal.

* The *Times*, July 25th, 1834.

† Idem, August 19th.

Parliament rose on the 9th of August; the Court remained at Windsor; the Chancellor set out on his memorable Gilpin ride through Scotland; the President of the Council went to Paris; Sir Robert Peel went to study high art in Italy; O'Connell gat him unto his mountain home in Kerry; White's and the Travellers' and every other well-bred club after its kind went grouse or partridge shooting. The new Premier stayed in or near town, with the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to keep him company. In the discharge of his new functions of general oversight in the working of administration, he thought it high time to investigate how the commission of inquiry into the state of the destitute poor in Ireland was going on. The assistant commissioners had been named, half of them English and half Irish, with little regard apparently for antecedents or qualifications. Exceptions there were, of whom the most notable was Mr. G. C. Lewis, then entering upon the career in which he eventually gained such eminence. For some months little progress was made. Mr. Revans induced the board to recommend the appointment of several new Assistant Commissioners and the supercession of those who had proved inefficient. The authorities at the Castle demurred, and the board deputed their Secretary to carry their appeal to Whitehall. Duncannon, who understood thoroughly the difficulties of the case, after an interview with Mr. More O'Ferrall, undertook to obtain the Premier's sanction for the changes required; and by the beginning of September the local examinations in every part of Ireland were commenced, by which a body of evidence was collected that rendered it impossible any longer to refuse the enactment of a legal provision for the destitute in the poorest of the three kingdoms.

An error of inadvertence by one of the clerks in the Home Office regarding the names of two gentlemen who desired to be included in the revised Royal Commission of inquiry nearly led to a disagreement that would have

almost inevitably caused a break-up of the Government. It is no use moralising on the insignificance of the grit that wounds and blinds the natural eye: as useless would it be to interpolate apologetic platitudes between the provoking incidents of such an affair. Better let the individual most concerned tell the story in his own way. A letter from the Marquis Lansdowne of the 3rd of September expressed strongly his surprise that the reconstituted Commission of inquiry had been issued without the names of Mr. Bicheno and Sir Charles Grey, both of whom he had been promised should be included. Melbourne at once replied:—

> I was as much surprised as you or the gentlemen themselves could be at the omission of the names. They were sent to me upon a slip of paper, and I gave them in at the office, to whom exactly I do not remember, and desired that they might be inserted in the Commission. I apprehend that in the hurry of that time the slip of paper was lost, and as I had left the office before the issuing of the second Commission, I had not an opportunity of detecting the omission before it received the sign-manual. It can now be only remedied by a new Commission, about which I will write to Duncannon immediately.*

A few days later he forwarded the answer he had received from the Home Office, adding—

> It certainly would be very awkward to issue a third Commission, and there are no other means of remedying the error. It is quite unprecedented to insert names in such a Commission after it has received the sign-manual. Pray think of this, and try whether you cannot manage the matter with these gentlemen.†

This characteristic bit of common sense seemed to his friend rather too cool; and the Lord President, thoroughly vexed

* To Lord Lansdowne, September 4th, 1834.

† To the same, September 10th, 1834.

with his colleague, said he was weary of office, and that he wished to retire; but he did so without a word of reproach or petulance, and as though he preferred letting it be thought his wishes had been neglected or overruled, than that the blame of breaking a promise should be cast elsewhere. Melbourne answered as became him:—

I have just received your letter of yesterday. I am much obliged to you for the kindness and consideration of it. I feel very keenly the manner in which these gentlemen have been treated, and the situation in which you are placed, and I admit that it is no excuse either to them or to you that the error has happened accidentally or through inadvertence. I think it would be better, if possible, to avoid a new Commission, but if you feel it to be due to Sir C. Grey and Mr. Bicheno, and to save our honour, I will press upon Duncannon the absolute necessity of issuing it, taking upon myself the whole responsibiliity of doing so. If you can be satisfied with the course which you point out in the second paragraph of your letter, I will directly write to these gentlemen, explaining to them the whole of the circumstances, expressing to them my great sorrow at the accident, and promising them that if any opportunity should occur of repairing it, it shall be immediately taken advantage of. At any rate I think, upon reflection, you will hardly feel that you can take such a step as that to which you allude upon such a point as this, and at the same time do justice either to yourself or to the public interest. I dare say you are anxious enough to be released, but for God's sake consider that you are embarked, and that it is not an indifferent matter upon what occasion and in what manner you retire. Prospective change is generally exaggerated, and it is very probable that we have overrated, and may at present still more overrate the evil which would arise from a dissolution of the Government; but everything is due to the King, and much is due to that portion of the country who have supported us notwith-

standing the errors which we have committed and the blind confidence with which they often act. Internal differences more than external pressure make it difficult for any Government in these times to subsist for any length of time.*

The Lord President accepted his offer, and thereupon he wrote letters of explanation in the sense above stated:—

I have written to Sir Charles Grey, but I have somehow or another mislaid Mr. Bicheno's address. I wish you would send it to me, and I will immediately forward my letter to him also. All appears to have gone off well at Edinburgh, though they considered themselves sitting the whole time upon a barrel of gunpowder. The Chancellor writes me word that he will be in town two or three days before the 25th.†

The Chancellor was conservative at Inverness; but, changing his opinions as often as his horses, by the time he got to Dundee he was downright revolutionary. Here he was at the full; at Edinburgh he waned.‡

No respite was afforded to the reconstructed Government by either of the contending parties in Ireland. On the requisition of Lords Roden, Enniskillen, and Farnham, an aggregate meeting of the friends of the Church Establishment took place at the Mansion House, Dublin, attended by upwards of three thousand influential landed proprietors, clergymen, and merchants, "to consider the alarming situation of the Protestants of Ireland, and to protect their religion and property." Lord Winchelsea attended to offer the support of their brethren in England; and, as a pledge of his determination, announced that he was himself about to become an Orangeman. It was unanimously resolved to thank the House of Lords for throwing out the Tithe

* From South Street, September 12th, 1834.

† From Downing Street, September 18th, 1834.

‡ *Examiner*, Sept. 21st, 1834.

Bill; to declare that the Establishment was the basis of the Union; that the measures of the Government tended to subvert Protestantism and erect Popery in its place, and that Protestants should be prepared to die in defence of their religion.*

O'Connell lost as little time in resuming a threatening tone. In a series of letters from Derrynane he reviewed the disappointing course of legislation during the administration of Earl Grey, exulting in his fall, and fearing that his successor had not firmness of resolve to mend the ways of rule. Sectarian ascendency and political exclusion had not yet been renounced; the war for tithe still distracted the country; and public meetings being no longer subject to inhibition by the executive, he was preparing to renew the agitation for Repeal. Lord J. Russell thought that if he did, so soon after a ministry had been broken up by the abandonment of the powers of suppression, it would be necessary to call Parliament together earlier than usual.† Melbourne would not readily believe that, under a more tolerant and comprehensive policy, any political organisation was likely to be formed endangering the connection between the two countries. He had studied the anatomy of Irish existence for himself; and understood the comparative strength of its conflicting elements. He knew the tenacity of hold, the oneness of feeling, the thoroughness of organisation, and the habitual self-reliance of the old social garrison; and he was convinced that the executive had but to give the signal for taking them back into its former confidence to render all schemes of national severence vain. For him there was no terror in threats of agitation; and having undertaken to govern by constitutional means alone, he was averse from seeming to doubt the eventual efficacy of the experiment ere it had been fully tried. To the President of the Council the Premier wrote—

I certainly agree with you in the views which you take of

* August, 14th, 1834.

† To Viscount Melbourne, September 1834.

O'Connell's proceedings. I have reason to think that what he has done is disapproved by some of the popular members who generally support him in the House of Commons, and that such disapprobation has been expressed to him. This may probably check him in his career; and if he does not take active measures on his part, or if the measures which he does take are not likely to be successful, we must not be too active on our side, nor before the public feeling and opinion. The cause and grounds of such measures as I mentioned in my last must be clearly and amply sufficient to expound to Parliament and to the country.*

Early in October Mr. O'Loghlen was made Irish Solicitor-General, and for the first time since the Revolution the Catholics saw one of their communion recognised as worthy of public trust and honour, as a law adviser of the Crown. His personal popularity, and high professional standing, in some degree mollified the anger his promotion caused among the partisans of exclusion; and they sought comfort in reflecting that Mr. Blackburn still remained Attorney-General. Popular satisfaction was proportionately abated thereby; but as an unmistakable proof of an altered policy, the fact was recognised by all reflecting men; and regarded as an omen of better days.

About the same time the venerable Sir John Newport, who had spent a long and stainless life in the service of his country, was appointed Comptroller of the Exchequer. The cotemporary of Grattan, Plunket, and Ponsonby, he had won the respect of men of all parties in Parliament by the manly, temperate, and consistent advocacy of every measure of legislative improvement carried in his time. Lord Wellesley's friendship for him had been from boyhood one of affection, and he did not hesitate to ascribe to his encouragement and guidance his own first strivings after fame. Newport was now grown old, and had been jostled out of his seat for Waterford by louder competitors for popular favour.

* September 10th, 1834.

But Melbourne, who had sat with him for nearly twenty years in opposition, felt that he could not more worthily bestow the favour of the Crown.

The first Garter to be given away had been conferred on the Duke of Norfolk; about the disposal of the next likely to be vacant, he wrote to Lord Lansdowne:—

I wished to say one word to you at Holland House, before you went away, but missed the opportunity, which forces me to trouble you with this letter, lest I should be too late in the morning. From what I hear of Lord Chatham's state of health, I think it not impossible that his blue ribband may become vacant ere long, and I wish to be prepared for the event. Your claim upon the next vacancy was fully admitted upon the last occasion, but some circumstances have occurred of which I think it right that you should be put in possession, in order that you yourself may consider and decide whether they make any difference in your views. The Duke of Grafton, as you may remember, declined the ribband which became vacant by the death of Lord Bathurst, and it was conferred upon the Duke of Norfolk. Not very long after this had taken place, the Duke of Grafton came to me and stated that the offer had been made to him when he was suffering under great affliction from the recent loss of his son; that his mind was much cast down by that event, and that under the influence of melancholy, and almost of despair, he had declined the honour, as he should at that moment have done any other offer of worldly distinction or advantage; that upon reflection since he felt that he had acted hastily and disrespectfully towards the King in so doing; that he had had an audience of his Majesty in order to express his regret, and that his feelings were entirely altered upon the subject. That relation was confirmed to me by the King, who had evidently been hurt by the Duke's refusal, and felt anxious that he should receive a mark of favour which had often before been conferred

upon his family. I certainly do not myself perceive why this change, and the great willingness of the Duke of Grafton to accept that which he before refused, should make any change in your situation: that is entirely for yourself to decide; but I have thought it right that you should be acquainted with these occurrences in order that you may give them such weight as you may think they deserve, and act upon them as you think proper.*

The characteristic reply of his correspondent waiving all personal pretensions, left him free to bestow the much-coveted decoration as might seem best for the interest of the party; and his Grace of Grafton, who was a steady Whig, had the blue riband.

On the evening of the 16th of October, as Melbourne sat at dinner with Althorp and Auckland, a message from Downing Street conveyed the startling intelligence that the Houses of Parliament were on fire. All were quickly on the spot, as were Palmerston, Hobhouse, Lords Munster and Adolphus Fitzclarence, and the Speaker's eldest son. They remained for some hours conferring with and encouraging those who directed the military and the police in their efforts to circumscribe the ravages of the flame. Before midnight it was the Premier's duty to acquaint the King at Windsor of what had occurred. He believed it would have no little effect upon the royal mind; and he felt it impossible to banish its influence from his own.

In the gloomy recesses of his loneliness the image of the fire frequently presented itself. He could not pretend even to himself that he was superstitious; he never was able to believe as much as other men, and he was sorry for it. As for auguries, he would have laughed and scoffed at the very notion, were it gravely propounded by fanatic or soothsayer. And yet there was something depressing and disheartening for him in the burning up of the oak-panelled chapel where he had heard Fox and Wyndham and Pitt. The

* To Lord Lansdowne, October 1834.

old system of government, under which the country had risen to unprecedented greatness, was gone, and he had helped to put an end to it, not without misgivings; for, with all its anomalies and faults, his reading and reflection bid him doubt whether any one could tell how the new system substituted for it would work. With a monarch able to sway by his energy or example the national mind,—an aristocracy willing to adapt their still vast means of social and political influence to the altered condition of things,—and a hierarchy up to the mark of the time in intellect, and capable of competing with subversive and disintegrating philosophy and fashion, he would, he thought, feel confident still of all going well again. But with a prince like William IV., hardly to be kept from betraying the weakness of premature old age to the irreverent eyes of the outer world; a House of Peers impelled apparently by no further-sighted aim than that of recklessly avenging the humiliation they had lately brought upon themselves; and with church dignitaries too frequently content with a perfunctory discharge of their office, with a cold and bald ceremonial, and (as he knew practically too well) with the traditional habit of treating holy orders as a legal admission to a trading guild,—he could not feel sanguine or secure. Beneath his air of levity and enjoyment of good company and good-humour, the sense of responsibility weighed heavily upon him, and there were solitary moments when he believed that he had been happier, and would be happier again, without primary accountability for the fate of an empire. In moods like these the glare of the flame that no efforts could quench during that still October night rose ominously in his imagination; and he was half vexed at observing how little of historic sentiment in the public mind the catastrophe revealed. The newspapers nearly all affected an utilitarian tone on the occasion; and there were not wanting expressions of congratulation that an inadequate and incommodious structure had been removed without the loss of life or much property of value, greatly facilitating thereby

the erection of a more convenient senate house. The King on the morrow of the disaster made it known that he was ready to place Buckingham Palace, then nearly completed for his use, at the service of Parliament. His minister encouraged the idea, without caring to inquire how far it would eventually prove to be practicable, from a genuine desire that royalty should make itself popular, and glad of the opportunity thus afforded. Subsequent consideration led to the conviction that as Westminster Hall and the Courts of Law and the Speaker's residence, with many of the indispensable buildings near it, had escaped destruction, it would be more for the general convenience to fit up temporary accommodation for the two branches of the legislature on the site where they had so long been accustomed to assemble. The walls of the House of Lords were still standing, and Sir John Hobhouse, as Commissioner of Woods and Forests, reported that when newly roofed they would suffice to afford eligible lodgings for a Ten-pound House of Commons. The Lords might contrive to do very well with the old Painted Chamber, whose tapestries had been burned, and whose aspect was seared and sullied by the fire, but which might be refitted and refurnished suitably though not imposingly as an hereditary chamber. The First Lord agreed with a shrug; and the workmen were soon busy with the execution of the plan, which answered better than was anticipated. The temporary House of Commons, though somewhat resembling a Primitive Methodist chapel, and with approaches and corridors no better than those of a third-rate theatre, answered tolerably well for the transaction of business; its acoustic properties proving unexceptionable. The peers were dissatisfied, as well they might be, with the undignified and uncomfortable chamber provided for them. By way of consolation it was promised that the first portion of the new palace of Westminster about to be built should be a suitable and splendid hall for their lordships: and in due time the promise was redeemed, though Melbourne did not live to see it.

CHAPTER II.

DISMISSAL OF THE WHIGS.

Althorp becomes a Peer—Interview with the King—Change of Government — Conduct of Brougham — Peel summoned from Rome—Speech at Melbourne—Address from Derby.

During the autumn Melbourne became aware that Lord Spencer's health was rapidly declining; and in answer to inquiries from the King, who expressed no ordinary concern, he felt it to be his duty to communicate Althorp's belief that his father drew near his end. At length the event occurred so long anticipated, but of which the consequences, immediate or eventual, were equally unforeseen by the wise who were supposed to be in the secrets of state and the simple who looked on from without; by those who held and those who coveted office; by the familiars of the Court and the editors of the daily press; by Westminster Hall, ever open-eared for the first whistling of the wind of change, and the money market, susceptible as the aspen leaf to its lightest breath. Except one old gentleman, never before suspected of the faculty of reticence, and his private secretary, no one in the three kingdoms seems to have been aware of what was actually impending; and as all the wit of party interest and party passion was for the residue of the year employed in vivisecting the acts and motives, words and looks of all who might or ought to have known anything about it, without discovering any accomplice before the fact, we may safely give William IV. the historic benefit of his boast that, "alone he did it."

Late in the afternoon of the 10th of November, Earl Spencer died at Althorp, in his seventy-seventh year. Age and infirmity had long withdrawn him from the world; but his mind continued clear; his delight in the progress of his favourite life-work, the library at Althorp, continued unabated; and his patriotic interest in public affairs, though chilled by the loss of the rarely endowed and accomplished wife of his youth, was rekindled by the prominent and popular position of his son in the administration. The friend of Fox and Burke, he lived to see the religious freedom advocated by the one and the democratic liberty claimed by the other; and the manumission of race pleaded for by both, accomplished in his day; and if his hands had to be held up by his old companion Grey, he had the satisfaction of feeling that those of his son had been actively engaged in securing the triple victory. The morning papers of the 12th announced his demise, and commented variously on the effects of the vacancy thus caused in the leadership of the Commons and the Ministry of Finance by Lord Althorp's elevation to the House of Peers. No exaggerated sense of the ministerial loss was affected by any of them. In a careful and dispassionate article the *Times* discussed the probabilities of the situation and left the balance of good and evil almost doubtful:—

> The most obvious consequence is the loss to Government of a decidedly favourite leader of the House of Commons. But there are other quarters of no less importance where it does not appear that Lord Althorp succeeded in acquiring equal popularity. His career as Chancellor of the Exchequer being now terminated, we hope that his successor may exhibit a more ample and well-digested knowledge of the public resources, and come better prepared both to defend his measures and to execute them. Mr. Spring Rice has, it seems, been designated by members of the moneyed interest, and we believe by his colleagues, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. But before we can form any confident opinion of his fitness it would be desirable to ascertain what personal share he had in the suggestion and

preparation of those budgets which were ostensibly the work of Lord Althorp. The present Lord Spencer's earnest wish is said to be to retire into private life; and without meaning in any sense to disparage the weight which Lord Melbourne may fairly attach to the experience, the name, and upright character of this nobleman, it is unquestionable that, since his chief value to the Government was as leader of the House of Commons, his secession from the Cabinet would now be less felt than while a member of that assembly. The choice of leader of the House of Commons will be the most perplexing of all that class of difficulties. It is not for us to pronounce an opinion, but it may be said that Mr. Abercromby has most experience and tact. Has he also sufficient nerve and strength?

The *Chronicle* and *Globe* were full of confident anticipations that Lord Spencer would remain in the Cabinet, and that Lord John Russell would prove a worthy successor in the department of finance. The organs of Opposition naturally wrapped their well-worn criticisms on the defects of the noble Commoner in the amplitude of compliments *ad invidiam* to the noble earl. They never, in fact, made so much of him before; and for the best act he had ever done never patted him on the back as they did when they hoped they were bidding him good-bye. But nowhere was there a hint muttered of an official revolution The Cabinet was not summoned to meet. Holland, Lansdowne, J. Russell, and Palmerston had several consultations with the Premier; but of the movements of their colleagues during the three succeeding days the public took no heed. In the afternoon Melbourne wrote to the King requesting an audience to submit for the royal consideration the views entertained by ministers of the general position of the Government, and their advice with regard to the future. He had, indeed, certain misgivings regarding the intentions of his friend, as the terms of his letter of condolence show.

MY DEAR ALTHORP,

I would not intrude upon you, whilst you must be under the impression of the recent melancholy event, of which I know that frequent anticipation cannot diminish the force, if I did not fear that you might perhaps omit to write to the King upon the subject. I have kept him day by day informed of your father's state, and he has continually expressed the most lively interest and concern. I am anxious therefore that he should hear from yourself without delay, and if, as is most probable, you have already done this, I am sure you will forgive my interference. I have not forgotten your letter to me, when the present Government was formed, with respect to your conduct in case of that event occurring which has now taken place. I say nothing at present except that I trust that you will not come hastily to any unalterable determination; particularly in the frame of mind which is produced by such scenes as those which you have been recently contemplating. I hope also that you will not suffer yourself to be influenced by any indiscreet communications which you may receive from any other quarter. I do not know of any such, but I think them not improbable.*

On his arrival at the Pavilion, William IV. received him without any seeming diminution of kindliness or confidence. The conversation lasted for an hour and a half; and to the unsuspicious Minister it appeared the wish of the King to disembarrass the discussion of all reserve. Melbourne, in a mood of false security, spoke, as he afterwards acknowledged, in a tone of more than ordinary considerateness respecting the reconstitution of the Government. It was not in his nature to be ungracious or ungrateful; and as he listened to the fretful misgivings and petulant complainings of his wayward Sovereign about the Irish Church projects of Duncannon and the recent antics of the Chancellor, he was beguiled into a tone too sympathetic for his own subsequent approval or for

* From Downing Street, November 11th, 1834.

the real interest of his master. His shrewdness was for once at fault. Living as he did habitually in the open air of public opinion, he forgot the depth of fatuity into which a feeble understanding may sink when left to maunder in seclusion and undiscernment, even though that seclusion be regal, and that undiscernment be the fruit chiefly of ineptitude to comprehend what goes on palpably under the palace windows. The wish to soothe what he regarded as mere peevish irritation, and doubtless likewise to gratify his own feeling of magnanimity and personal independence, led him to place himself at the disposition of one whom it was, after all, his duty to guide with firm and faithful counsel, and not to humour to his own hurt or hazard. It never occurred to the most common-sensical of ministers that William IV., after the failure of two attempts to overrule the majority of the House of Commons, was already full of a third. The Cabinet might not be as strong as could be wished, and the loss of the lieutenant whom he loved and trusted might for the moment be irreparable; but, after all that had happened since 1830, the idea that a minority of one-third in the Commons should undertake the government, against the will and without the acquiescence of the majority, never crossed his mind. When, therefore, he began by frankly enumerating his chief administrative causes of concern, and invited the sovereign to say whether he desired him to remain his chief minister, or whether he would rather look elsewhere for advice, there can be little doubt that he may possibly have been thinking of his kinsman and friend now about to take a seat beside him in the House of Lords, with greater advantages of ancestry, acreage, and actual services to his party, and higher popularity out of doors. Had the King named Lord Spencer to be Premier, every Whig would have assented, including Melbourne himself; but he knew, or thought he knew, that his nomination would have been in vain, and he probably recoiled from suggesting it from motives in themselves honourable and commendable. The conference turned on other topics, however; no apparent notice of his initiatory offer

was taken, and it was not repeated. Neither was it qualified or explained, as perhaps it ought to have been. Silently the King chose to construe it into a suggestion of a change of parties, while Melbourne meant it only as a profession of individual willingness to play an unselfish part. Several versions have been given of what ensued, seemingly irreconcilable, but capable of being reconciled in the main by keeping in view the essential difference of purpose above indicated.

According to the King's account of what passed, Melbourne said that as the personal influence of Althorp in the House of Commons was considered a main basis of the administration when he undertook the management of affairs, he felt it to be his duty, now that Althorp was removed from the Lower House, to ask whether it was his Majesty's wish that he should propose to him fresh appointments, or whether his Majesty preferred asking advice from other persons. He disclaimed any wish to abandon the service of his Sovereign as long as it was thought he could be useful. He felt confident that the existing administration would still retain the support of the House of Commons, and he was then prepared to submit arrangements suitable to the occasion.

In answer to the inquiry who was to be charged with the conduct of public business in the Lower House, he submitted the name of Lord John Russell as best qualified by experience, talent, and position: but he suggested in the alternative those of Spring Rice and Abercromby, either of whom would be deemed competent and acceptable by the Liberal party. The King discussed at considerable length the qualifications of each, but persistently disapproved of all. He objected strongly to Lord J. Russell, and said without reserve that he had not the abilities nor the influence which would qualify him for the task; observing that he would make a wretched figure when opposed by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Stanley. Melbourne thought the King laid more stress than was justifiable upon the necessity of being

a good speaker or ready debater; these being advantages which Lord Althorp did not possess, while he exercised an extraordinary influence in the House of Commons. The King objected equally, if not more, to Mr. Abercromby. He confessed that he was alarmed by some recent suggestions of Lord Duncannon to retrench the parochial endowment of the Church in Ireland in parishes where there was no cure of souls; and that he feared the result of the pending commission of inquiry into the relative proportion of religious communities there. He viewed with alarm the advancement of Lord John, who was pledged to like opinions. When he agreed to the numbering of the Irish people according to the creeds they professed, he had given no pledge, as the minister would remember, to adopt measures founded on the numerical proportion it might disclose; and he therefore considered himself free to refuse his assent to measures that he anticipated might be founded thereon. This would probably lead to serious difficulties with his confidential advisers, if, knowing their individual opinions beforehand, he now handed over the leading conduct of affairs in Parliament to those from whose views he differed widely. His Majesty was evidently under the impression that Lansdowne and Spring Rice would relinquish office sooner than acquiesce in the expropriation of any portion of Church property in Ireland for general purposes of education; and their secession after the loss of Althorp would complete the dismemberment of the Cabinet of July. He said that Lord Lansdowne had told him, on the secession of Mr. Stanley and those who retired with him, that he concurred most decidedly in their feelings on the Church question, and that the earnest solicitation of Lord Grey alone induced him to continue a member of the administration. Melbourne did not upon this occasion, or upon any other, admit that differences of opinion prevailed in the Cabinet which might produce its dissolution before the meeting of Parliament; nor did he express any doubt of his ability to carry on the government. But his Majesty

thought he knew better than his responsible ministers how far they were agreed, and the strength they could command in the Commons. There was in truth no likelihood of schism, or of any important defection on the question of the Irish Church, as the confidential correspondence and the public proceedings of the next few months conclusively prove. Wholly unsuspicious of what was impending, he reasoned each point frankly but forbearingly with his illogical and impulsive master, trusting that upon reflection he would come of himself to see the expediency of following his counsel. Melbourne was, in feeling as in policy, a royalist, and he shrank from even seeming to humiliate his weak and wilful sovereign, who was sensible, as he himself declared, "of the frank and unreserved manner in which Melbourne had discussed the whole subject and had replied to the various questions he had put to him; but he failed in convincing him that any arrangement could be made which would enable him to carry on the government satisfactorily, or which could prevent the early dissolution of the administration at a period more inconvenient and more pregnant with exciting causes."* In a long conversation in which various difficulties and objections were discussed, but without giving the minister any reason to suspect what was contemplated, his Majesty said he would take time to think over the matter, and ended the consultation by saying, "Now let us go to dinner." Nothing more occurred during the evening; but next morning the King handed Melbourne a letter, evidently prepared with no little care, in which he stated that he was informed that Althorp's removal would speedily leave the Government in a minority in the Lower House; and as they were already in that condition in the Upper, it had become necessary to place the conduct of affairs in other hands. No alternative proposal was suggested, or qualification offered of the peremptory nature of the dismissal. In the words of Palmerston, "The Govern-

* 'A Statement of His Majesty's General Proceedings since his Accession,' I. Stockmar, p. 314. Letter from Palmerston, November 15th, 1834.

ment had not resigned, but were dismissed; and this not in consequence of having proposed any measure of which the King disapproved and which they would not give up, but because it was thought they were not strong enough in the Commons to carry on the business of the country, and their places were to be filled up by men who were notoriously weak and unpopular in the Lower House, however strong they might be in the Upper one."

The democratic enthusiasm which had lately carried Reform had indeed declined, but a sudden attempt to resume paramount authority by the Crown would be certain to rekindle aggressive hopes and schemes. If there must be a change of hands, Melbourne wished, for the sake of the monarchy and of his own order, that it should be brought about in a constitutional manner. He felt it therefore to be his duty to remind his Sovereign that a large majority in Parliament had upon every question of importance supported the administration. William IV. replied that they were in a minority in the Peers, and he had reason to believe that they would speedily be in the same condition in the Commons; he added peremptorily that they had better therefore resign without loss of self-respect. It would have been impossible to press the matter further. It unhappily seemed as though his Majesty had been misled into the unconstitutional course of taking counsel of others without the knowledge of his legitimate advisers; and that he was about to follow some secret and irresponsible counsel in opposition to their advice. Half a century before, George III. had turned out the Whigs as summarily; but the days for such royal exploits were gone, and the days of danger in reattempting them were come.

Melbourne did not affect to conceal his surprise and concern at what he justly deemed an act of perilous infatuation. Too proud to parley for the retention of office after confidence in his judgment had been so unceremoniously withdrawn, he rejected, in the briefest terms which deference would allow, the offer of an earldom and the Garter. He

felt that he had been trifled with and mocked; and the blood mantled to his check as he haughtily inquired what further commands awaited him. A moment afterwards he relented. He felt that he ought not to shrink, through any feeling of false delicacy, from stating calmly but plainly the difficulties and dangers into which the short-sighted monarch was about to plunge. A majority of at least two-thirds in the Lower House were known to be opposed to the policy of holding down Ireland any longer by measures of exclusion and force. A dissolution under ordinary circumstances might alter these proportions; but a dissolution brought about by no act of ministers, and by no vote of either House of Parliament, would inevitably evoke popular emotions that long had slept. For himself he asked no consideration; but to spare the feelings of others who were alluded to in the note disparagingly, and to mitigate the resentment it was calculated to excite, "In the handsomest manner, and from feelings of devotion and attachment to which his Majesty was anxious to do the fullest justice, he suggested a partial alteration which, without changing the general sense, divested this communication of all that could give offence to any individual; and it thus appeared that the declared and ostensible ground of his Majesty's decision was his conviction that the general weight and consideration of the Government had been so much diminished in the House of Commons and with the country at large, as to render it impossible that they should continue to conduct the public affairs with advantage."* The personal allusions to Lord John and the Chancellor were thus omitted, together with the imprudent declaration of royal hostility to Irish Church reform, which the prescient sagacity of Melbourne saw could only lead to grave embarrassment, and to his Majesty's humiliation. The rapidity with which all these contingent consequences were grasped, and the magnanimity of his whole demeanour under circumstances so trying, were only equalled by the considerate tact with which

* Statement of his Majesty, &c., already quoted.

he made use of his last opportunity to give confidential advice as a minister. He then desired to know when and to whom he should resign his trust. The King replied that he had made up his mind to send at once for the Duke of Wellington.

As he passed through the adjoining room he could not refrain from saying to Sir Herbert Taylor, by whose aid he knew that the written form of his dismissal had been prepared, "Your old master would not have done this." The private secretary was embarrassed, as he well might be, what to reply; and in his confusion said he had just concluded a letter to Sir Henry Wheatley which his master thought it of the utmost importance to have delivered that night. Would his lordship object to allowing his servant, on reaching town, to leave it at St. James's Palace? It was impossible not to divine that the missive which the perplexed amanuensis had just sealed contained a summons to the Duke. The ludicrous aspect of the affair was irresistible; and Melbourne with a grim smile undertook to play the part of first mute at his own funeral. Ere quitting Brighton he wrote to Althorp:—

I came down here yesterday, in order to converse with the King upon the present state of affairs, and after two very full and unreserved communications, he has determined that the present Government is so weak in the House of Lords, and is now so much weakened in the House of Commons, that it cannot go on advantageously: that therefore he will not direct me to make the announcement rendered necessary by the recent event, but will send for the Duke of Wellington. The various reasons for this determination will present themselves to your mind, and I apprehend you will not much lament it, as it both relieves you from any further annoyance, and also falls in with that which was your opinion, viz., that it would be better that the Tories should make one more effort to form a Government. Whether the King's decision be

> wise or not, I am convinced that it has been come to conscientiously, and upon his own conviction, and not in consequence of any other advice or influence whatsoever.

It was not unnatural that others should form a different opinion, and give it expression in no measured terms. But Melbourne had looked into the shallow mind of the King as they had not done, and his penetrating gaze had discovered nothing such as they supposed. In point of fact, the Duke of Wellington had not had any communication with the Court, directly or indirectly, for the three months preceding; and Sir Robert Peel had so little notion of being within call, that his servants on the following day were unable to tell with any degree of certainty where a letter would reach him abroad.

What were the thoughts of the dismissed minister during his solitary drive on that November evening? Did memory recall the words of Clarendon regarding his ancestor, Secretary Coke, sacrificed by Charles I. to a dark contrivance of the Court—"it put the Queen to the exercise of her full power to perfect her work; which afterwards produced many sad disasters"?* The Duke should have the royal message ere he slept; but what would he do? Without Peel he could do nothing; and Peel was in Italy. Even were he here he would hardly risk his reputation in a premature effort to attain power with a majority of a hundred against them in the Commons. Lyndhurst and Wharncliffe might be rash and ready as they were two years before; but would the Duke tell the King to-morrow that without a hostile vote or a resignation he ought to change the Government? It was late when the fallen minister reached Downing Street, where Palmerston alone was to be found. With him he spent the evening, and having summoned a Cabinet for the following morning, was about retiring to rest, when the Chancellor, on his way from Holland House, looked in just to hear that all was

* History, vol. i. p. 221.

right. Inexpressible was his amazement at learning that all was wrong. Melbourne, before going into details, made him promise to divulge nothing till they all met next day —and considering that it was then near midnight, his sanguine estimate of how far it was safe to gratify the curiosity of his importunate questioner may be excused: at least, it would have been excusable with respect to any other man, but in his case it was no doubt an error, and ere many hours its consequences were ripe and bitter. Before he slept Brougham communicated the startling intelligence to the *Times*, in which next morning the following paragraph appeared:—

> We have no authority for the important statement which follows, but we have every reason to believe that it is perfectly true. We give it without any comment or amplification, in the very words of the communication, which reached us at a late hour last night. "The King has taken the opportunity of Lord Spencer's death to turn out the Ministry, 'and there is every reason to believe the Duke of Wellington has been sent for. The Queen has done it all.'"

Before they had time to receive any private intimation the next morning, his colleagues learned with amazement, that they had been dismissed. On entering the breakfast-room Lady Lansdowne read the paragraph to her lord, who smiled in his usual way, and began to talk of something else without giving the announcement a thought. In a few minutes a brief note from South Street confirmed the tidings; and by noon the principal members of the Cabinet had assembled to consider what should be done. Their deliberations were brief and to little purpose. Their chief failed to impress them with his view of the transaction; and there can be no doubt that, if not at first, the notion soon gained ground that he had been too easy in his mode of dealing with the Sovereign, and that he had too quietly acquiesced in an indefensible attempt to resume the old ways

of prerogative which it was imagined had with George III. passed from the thoughts of men. Lansdowne, with whom he made most confidence, was disposed to look at the matter through his eyes. "Nobody," he said, "so well understood as Melbourne how to manage William IV. Even he could not perhaps have kept him right had all been left to him; but after the unwarrantable announcement on the morning of the 15th, and the open imputations of intrigue and deception that broke forth on all sides, it became hopeless." *

The Duke received at Strathfieldsaye the royal summons early on the 15th, and, without returning to town, reached Brighton late in the afternoon. The King told him no one had as yet been made aware of what he had done the previous day; and it is said that when the names of the guests who were to dine that evening were presented by the lord-in-waiting to Queen Adelaide, she expressed surprise that the list included his Grace, of whose arrival she was not aware. He represented at the outset the impossibility of any Tory combination which would afford the prospect of carrying on the Government unless Sir Robert Peel was at its head; and the Liberal majority in the Commons being two to one, he did not see how even with that advantage success could attend the experiment. For his own part he was willing to occupy any position that might be considered expedient, but he was endeavouring to dissuade his Majesty from proceeding further in a change of hands so unprepared, when Sir Herbert Taylor entered the room, and apologized for calling his royal master's attention to the paragraph in the *Times* that morning, which stated that "the Queen had done it all." The anger which these long-remembered words excited may be readily conceived. "There, Duke, you see how I am insulted and betrayed; nobody in London but Melbourne knew last night what had taken place here, nor of my sending for you: will your Grace compel me to take back people who have treated me in this way?" The Duke yielded; and said he would at once communicate with Lord

* In conversation with the author.

Lyndhurst, and despatch a messenger in quest of the indispensable member for Tamworth. Early on Sunday, the 16th, Mr. Hudson was told to be in readiness to bear despatches abroad; and the Chief Baron found himself for the third time Keeper of the Great Seal. The King was determined to make a clearance of the whole party; Lord Duncannon was sent for out of church to give up the Seals, and a council was summoned for Monday morning, that the change of Government might be completed with the least possible delay. Meanwhile Palmerston believed the whole affair to have been pre-arranged:—

> It is impossible to doubt that this has been a preconcerted measure, and that the Duke of Wellington was prepared at once to form a Government. Peel is abroad, but it is not likely he would have gone without a previous understanding one way or the other with the Duke, as to what he would do, if a crisis were to arise. I lament this event because I can see nothing but mischief arising out of it.

Brougham was beside himself with rage. To Earl Spencer he broke forth:—

> What you and I and all men of sound minds thought impossible, is come to pass, and only because you are removed from the House of Commons the King turns us all out, a thing never before done, and without waiting for the House of Commons to express its distrust in John Russell or in us. It is incredible but the Duke will be goaded on by his hungry creatures to try this desperate experiment. I have written to the King to throw all the consequences on him and relieve myself.*

At the last meeting of the superseded Cabinet, Melbourne indicated his opinion that Lord John ought to undertake thenceforth to lead the party in the Commons.† Palmerston looked gravest, and hastened back to his standing desk to

* To Earl Spencer, November 15th, 1834.

† Lord Lansdowne to T. S. Rice, January 27th, 1835.

complete despatches with whose importance his mind was full; Brougham talked more loudly and wildly than ever, and rushed about during the afternoon to tell the little that he knew and to supply the rest from conjecture; Duncannon seemed the angriest at what had happened, and was the most inclined to cavil at the opportunity which he thought had been gratuitously afforded to the Court of getting rid of them. But in Melbourne pride was more powerful than ambition: he had made Althorp's ministerial aid the condition of his taking the Premiership; and although he had grown convinced that it was not indispensable, he could not bring himself to say so to a weak and suspicious Sovereign, and provoke the possible reproach of eagerness to escape from still recent obligation. Sooner than do this he was willing individually to leave his Majesty free to choose in whom he would repose his chief confidence; and William IV. was not slow to fasten on the generous but unguarded offer. Had he been asked to explain what he meant, Melbourne would certainly have said, as he was in honour and consistency bound to say, that the head of the future administration should be sought for among men whom Parliament and the public generally would recognise as entitled to guide in council. He certainly did not believe, and he therefore could not have advised, that a majority of the House of Commons or of the community at large, in the then existing state of national feeling, would accept Sir Robert Peel or the Duke of Wellington; as the event soon afterwards proved. The predominant prejudices of the constituent body were in 1808 on the side of royalty, and its arbitrary decision was therefore suffered to prevail. But two years after the Reform Act it was too soon to ignore the will of the House of Commons, and Melbourne, who was more shocked than offended at his summary dismissal, never deigned in public or private to utter a syllable of complaint. He sympathised perhaps too little in the chagrin and mortification of his party, and he sympathised not at all in the anger and resentment in which some of them indulged.

He spent Saturday evening with his son, Lord Mulgrave, and Mr. E. S. Stanley at Drury Lane to witness a new play in which Mr. Yonge and Miss Ellen Tree took the principal parts. And he stayed till the end of the performance chatting and laughing as if nothing had happened.

There was no more to be said, and so he said no more, having on this and every other occasion an insuperable aversion to platitudes and palaverings of all kinds. A respectful letter from him disclaiming all knowledge of the announcement in the *Times*, and wholly repudiating the imputation against the Queen, did little to appease the royal indignation, and a communication from Apsley House recommended that a council should be held at St. James's on the 17th to receive the resignation of the out-going ministers and instal certain of their successors *ad interim*. To each of his colleagues on the 16th he wrote:—

> The Duke of Wellington is appointed First Lord of the Treasury, and I have received his Majesty's commands to direct you to attend to-morrow at St. James's Palace at half-past two, in order to resign the seals of your department. A council is announced for the above-named hour.
>
> Yours faithfully, MELBOURNE.

Lord Lansdowne explained to the King that it was not necessary he should act on the occasion as President of the Council, and he asked permission for himself and his colleagues to withdraw; which being granted, an order was made for the further prorogation of Parliament; Lyndhurst kissed hands as Chancellor, the Duke as First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State for Home, Colonial, and Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Hudson's journey in search of a prime minister began and ended curiously enough. He was then a very young man, having been one of the royal pages and afterwards assistant to Sir Herbert Taylor, for whom he always entertained sincere regard for the priceless services rendered

to the King in 1831 and 1832.* When the Whig ministry was dismissed Sir H. Taylor asked Hudson if he would like to go abroad. He said "Yes." "Then you must start to-morrow morning in search of Sir R. Peel, and take him a letter from the King, and one from the Duke of Wellington." He came to town to make inquiries about Peel, but could find no direction at his house. It was Sunday evening, and he had no money for his journey. He went to the Keeper of the Privy Purse, who told him he had nothing like £500, which Hudson said would be necessary: but through an old clerk at Herries' Bank he got that sum and set off for Paris. The news had preceded him, and he could get no information from Lord Granville or any one at the Embassy as to the whereabouts of Sir Robert. It was supposed he was still in Italy, but that was all. By dint of driving hard and paying freely, he got to Rome on the ninth day, which was considered then great speed. On reaching Peel's hotel he found that he was at a ball at Torlonia's. He left the letter with Lady Peel and returned for the answer later. When he was shown in Sir Robert stood behind a large table covered with papers, bowed formally, asked what day he had left England and what hour he had reached Rome: and then observed drily—"I think you might have made the journey in a day less, by taking another route." Hudson bit his lip with chagrin at this ungracious reception, but taking the despatches in reply, set out forthwith for England. At Paris he was very differently received; but hurrying on to Boulogne, he had the vexation to see the mail packet steaming out of the harbour. Some fishermen undertook for a large sum to take him across in a small boat. The weather was fine; but when close to Dover a panic seized them; they said they would be taken prisoners if they ventured to land in England, and no expostulations or bribes could induce them to put in. Luckily Hudson was enabled to

* His papers were left in perfect order, and would have been very valuable for historical purposes, but by the order of Queen Adelaide they were all destroyed.

make signals to a vessel in the offing, which took him on board and landed him at Dover. On reaching London he went straight to Apsley House and left his letter for the Duke, who immediately forwarded its contents to Windsor. The Messenger was so tired that he went to his rooms at St. James's and was soon asleep. The first person of the Household whom he saw told him he had got into a devil of a scrape by omitting to present the letter for the King on the previous night. He hastened to do so; and on entering the anteroom met an old servant, who said to him, "I did not think you were so green as to *come* with the letter, after making the mistake you have done." He took the hint, and leaving Sir Robert's reply, made his way back to town. For nearly a month he did not venture to present himself to his Majesty, who was highly displeased with him. But he was then advised to wait upon the King, and after some manifestations of ill-humour he was forgiven, and told he might keep the balance of £70 he had unspent out of the £500 he started with. He went to Tattersall's bought a horse with the money, and went out next day with the Staghounds. But the brute turned out to be a regular screw, and threw him more than once. And this was the upshot of his first journey to Italy in the affairs of which he was destined in later life to play so conspicuous a part.

Spring Rice had told Althorp that as to the precise proposition made by Melbourne to the King in respect to the mode of filling up the Exchequer he was not informed; having avoided asking any question whatever, lest he should be considered as having any possible wishes of a personal nature. He had stated to the members of the Government that so long as it held together on its own principles, whatever might be his expectations of the session, whether in the position he then occupied or removing elsewhere, he was ready to do anything within the compass of his own strength that would be considered expedient for the public service, always excepting anything in relation to the management of the House of Commons; that for such duties he

neither had the extended and general knowledge, the personal weight, or the ability requisite. To Melbourne he added that to which he should still adhere; that Abercromby would have been the safest leader; but of course, if John Russell was proposed, he should be ready to concur.

In his own gentle but unswerving way, Lord Spencer made his condemnation known of the conduct of the King. Personally he had no reason to complain, for it had given him that liberation from the yoke of office for which he had so frequently striven in vain. He was at length relieved from trammels and obligations the burthen of which had become ineffably wearisome;* and it was the act of his Majesty that had set him free. Private feeling and public decorum closed his lips for the time. He remained for some weeks at Althorp in seclusion, and finally made up his mind to take no further part in public affairs. But in the calm of his retirement he was peculiarly qualified to weigh the motives which had led to the dismissal of his late colleagues, and the consequences of that dismissal; and his judgment was unwavering and stern. He suggested to Mr. Hume, with whom he had never had any private confidence, and very intermittent public agreement, "that an early opportunity should be taken to ascertain what the opinion of the new House of Commons was upon the mode in which Lord Melbourne had been dismissed."† In his view, the conduct of William IV. was not only reprehensible, but far too dangerous as an example to be suffered to pass unreprehended by Parliament. As he was resolved never again to lead, he refrained from doing more than letting his opinion be known as a member of the party; but, except to resign his father's insignia of the Garter, he abstained from attending at Court.

To earnest remonstrances against withdrawal from public life Lord Spencer pleaded the condition of his fortune; for with a nominal income of £50,000 he would not have £10,000 to spend. He was bound to keep up Althorp, and that

* Letter to Lord Holland, February 9th, 1835.

† Letter to Joseph Hume, M.P., January 31st, 1835.

consequently a fall in rents of twenty per cent. would leave him in actual necessity: that he meant to let Spencer House, and to reside almost exclusively in the country. He stated, among other considerations, that if he did take up a position in politics, it might be considered more or less as looking hereafter to form a Government; that even on personal grounds he felt, if such alternative were presented to him, he would wish to escape from it, as he did not think himself competent for such a task; and, moreover, that he considered private circumstances very different from his own to be a *sine quâ non* for a Prime Minister. He saw no possibility of his change of opinion. His anticipations were that the next Government would be formed by Lords Grey and Stanley.*

Lord Lyndhurst had hardly resumed his former place on the Woolsack, when he received a letter from Brougham offering to take the vacant seat in the Exchequer, thus saving the country, as he said, his pension of £5000 a year. The proposal was laid before the Duke, by whom it was at once rejected; and a friendly intimation being made by the Chancellor that the dignity of Chief Baron was likely to be bestowed on Scarlett, his predecessor sought to retrieve his mistake by formally withdrawing the offer to serve in a subordinate capacity, as having been made without sufficient reflection. By whom the fact was first divulged is uncertain; its effect when known cannot better be described than in the words of Melbourne:—

> Brougham never mentioned to me his proposition to Lyndhurst until after he had made it. I was perfectly astonished. I think it a step which proves a greater want of judgment, a grosser ignorance of his own situation, than any which he has yet taken. The original error is, in fact, only made more glaring by the subsequent retractation; but I am not sure that this will be the general impression. I very much doubt whether the King would have been persuaded to

* T. S. Rice to Lord Lansdowne, December 7th, 1834.

have made him a common law judge, and I am quite sure that he would have been right in resisting it.*

The opinion thus early expressed is of importance to be borne in mind, as throwing light upon the reasons which led to Brougham's omission from the Cabinet when the Whigs returned to power. H. B. fixed indelibly the ridiculous air of the transaction by a cartoon, in which a fox, as like the ex-Chancellor as quadruped could be, was depicted stealthily making off from the door of the Exchequer, at which he cast a lingering glance, while Scarlett looked out from the foliage of the vine overhanging the portal, and the legend beneath in a phrase told the story of *Vaux and the Grapes.*

The Emperor Nicholas learned, at Berlin, the change which had occurred in the British Cabinet; he gave vent to his exceeding joy and confident hope that the foreign policy of England would be wholly reversed; the Quadruple Alliance dissolved, and Belgium be re-united to Holland. Count Bülow, who had long been Prussian Minister here, tried to undeceive him, but the Czar argued logically that, as the Tories were honourable men, they would bring into office the principles they avowed in opposition; and act upon them, whatever Parliament might think, or vote to the contrary; for if the King had the power to appoint them, regardless of the will of the House of Commons and the constituencies, he need not allow them to be removed for acting with consistency.† And here lay the kernel of the forbidden fruit rashly and blindly clutched at by the King. Though not in formal words or acts, he had done what, to his own discomfiture, would prove to be an abortive usurpation, if the constituencies were appealed to and should reverse his judgment of the policy which ought to be pursued by his ministers; for those ministers would be held responsible to the House of Commons; and if a majority condemned them he could not retain them in their places. The event quickly proved that in acting on his own

* To Lord Lansdowne, from Renton Abbey, December 7th, 1834.

† Greville Memoirs.

surmise of what the country wished and wanted he had grievously and greatly erred, and had exposed not merely those whom he preferred as ministers, but the authority and dignity of the crown itself, to needless and mortifying humiliation.

While acknowledging the various accomplishments and manly understanding of Melbourne, and that "there could not have been selected a statesman better qualified to preside over a Cabinet containing conflicting opinions and antagonistic ambitions," Lord Dalling reproaches the Administration with lack of vigour and powerlessness to maintain authority. He ascribes their alleged weakness especially to O'Connell's vanity, which the pride of the English people would not allow them to appease; and to the increasing credit and influence of Sir Robert Peel.* The superiority of the Conservative leader in debate had indeed been strikingly manifested in the last two sessions; still more remarkable had been his tact and discretion. Alone among his contemporaries of the first rank, he possessed when upon his legs perfect command over the temper of his tongue; and this was the more notable, and, let it be fairly owned, the more commendable, in one whose inveterate self-consciousness and nervous irritability of constitution all the arts of the habitual actor were unable to conceal. Again and again did Canning, Brougham, O'Connell, Stanley, and above all the Duke of Wellington, startle and stagger their devoted friends by impetuous outbursts and inconsiderate sallies or pledges impossible to keep. With him, on the contrary, every word was so weighed that it might be said without exaggeration, before he answered a question or made a speech, he had in his mind corrected it for the press. His errors were errors of judgment, not of language; of calculation, not of temper; they were consequently more apt to be made in office than in opposition, but whether in or out of power (with one signal and painful exception†) he never let passion run away with him on the high-

* 'Historical Sketch of Sir R. Peel,' p. 103.

† No one acquainted with parliamentary history needs to be reminded of the altercation in 1843 between Sir R. Peel and Mr. Cobden, in which,

road. And it is undoubtedly true that in a season when the tide of popular ascendency is upon the ebb, the importance, dignity, and intellectual breadth, if not height, of such a man are greatly enhanced. So far, the writer of the historic sketch may be regarded as forming a correct estimate of the time. But what is to be thought of the allegation that the Cabinet of 1834 was overthrown because it failed "to maintain authority"? Authority in legislation it had not yet had any opportunity of exercising, the session being virtually over when Lord Grey resigned. Authority in the preservation of order it certainly did maintain during the five months of its existence, both in England and in Ireland, as it had not been maintained under the Tory Government of 1828, or the Whig Government of 1830. Political agitation and social crime had observably lessened in a remarkable degree; so much so, that when a dissolution took place in the following December, all parties confessed that the perplexing element in their various estimates of the result was the unusual tranquillity, some called it apathy, of the public mind. Still less accurate is the rhetorical assertion with respect to O'Connell. Vanity indeed he had; and, like his other qualities, it looked great, for he was a great man. Just then he was not in a complaining mood, though nothing whatever had been done to gratify that feeling, or any other which he possessed in common with other prominent personages, noble and plebeian; and curiously enough, it was he who, when the Melbourne Cabinet fell, raised the first rallying cry for their reinstatement, and in a week persuaded his followers in Ireland to adjourn the discussion of Repeal and to join a new society which he called the Anti-Tory Association. Considering all that had occurred in the four years preceding, during which offices, decorations, titles, flatteries, and distinctions of all kinds had been lavished upon every other

although for a moment he carried the feelings of the House along with him, he was the first himself to recover from the delusion into which he had been betrayed, and prompt to modify the terms of the imputation he had cast on his opponent.

chief or leader of opinion, it would not have been surprising had he stood aloof in silent exultation, his wounded vanity being at last avenged. But to ascribe the event to such a cause is absolutely without justification; and not less groundless is the fantastic notion that the reason why his vanity could not be appeased was because the pride of the English people would be mortified at honour being paid to one who had defied their power. Subsequent events tell a very different tale.

Of the cashiered Cabinet, Auckland alone retained office for some weeks at the request of the Duke for the convenience of the public service. Brougham, unable to dissemble his chagrin, fled to France; Lord Lansdowne betook himself to Bowood; Lord John to Woburn; Spring Rice to Hastings; Abercromby to Scotland; and their late chief to Derbyshire. On the 26th of November he received an address from the inhabitants of Melbourne conveying to him their surprise and regret at his recent removal from office, and their grateful sense of his public services: to which he replied:—

I beg leave to return you my warmest and most grateful thanks for this address. It is indeed a great satisfaction to me to return hither, after an absence of now more than four years, and to find myself again amongst those with some of whom I am connected by the relations of property, and to all of whom I am united by the strongest ties of friendship and attachment, and by the common interest which we all feel in the welfare and prosperity of the nation at large and of this part of the country in particular. The pleasure which I should naturally feel upon such an occasion is greatly enhanced by this testimony of your approbation of my public conduct. With respect to the events which have recently taken place, and which are the immediate cause of your address, you will not, I am sure, expect that I should enter into any detail or explanation. Suffice it to say, that I do not feel myself, in

the slightest degree, personally aggrieved by anything that has taken place. The question of who shall be the ministers of this country at this period is one of so much importance, and pregnant, possibly, with such serious consequences, that any considerations connected with it personally affecting an individual, whatever may be his rank, station, or talents, sink in comparison into utter nothingness and insignificance. You have mentioned in your address the Act for the better representation of the people in Parliament; and I entirely concur with your observations on the subject. After many years of apprehension, of doubt, and of more than doubt, whether it would be prudent and expedient to make so large and sudden an alteration, I deemed it to be my duty to promote and support that measure, because I felt it to be demanded by a great majority of the respectability and intelligence of the community. At the same time it is a very rapid and extensive change, and rapid and extensive changes in human affairs can never be regarded without uneasiness and anxiety. It gives to the people at large much greater power than they before possessed; and the resolution of the question whether power has been wisely confided depends entirely upon the manner in which it is employed, and the effects which it produces. The people, as well as kings and ministers, are responsible to God and to man, in heaven and on earth, here and hereafter, for the exercise of the power committed to their charge, and if any of them are tempted to abuse it, depend upon it in this age of intelligence and inquiry they will not long be able to retain an authority of which they prove themselves to be unworthy. The cautious and temperate tone of this address is to me a sufficient proof and guarantee that the portion of political power which is placed in your hands will be exercised with temper, circumspection, moderation, and justice. It is undoubtedly true, as stated in your address, that it was the intention of myself and colleagues, if we had remained in office, to have proposed

such reformations both in the ecclesiastical and civil departments of the State as appear to be demanded by existing defects. You are all doubtless aware that a controversy has lately been carried on between men of great eminence and weight in the country upon the subject of the progress of reformation, whether it should be slow or fast, whether much or little should be proposed in the next session of Parliament. I can only say for myself, that—I know not whether it should have been considered much, or whether it should have been considered little,—I should have been for bringing forward as much as was sufficient, as much as would have remedied the most pressing evils, as much as could have been digested and matured, as much as under the circumstances it could be considered safe, prudent, and practicable to effect. Gentlemen, I am much gratified by the expression of confidence which is contained in the last paragraph of your address. I shall strenuously endeavour to deserve it. I shall persevere in the course which I have hitherto invariably held. I shall support such alterations as appear to me to be well founded and likely to be beneficial. It will be my anxious desire to remove every grievance, and even every inconvenience, which may press upon any portion of his Majesty's subjects, either in their civil or in their religious capacity, either as citizens of the State or as members of any particular sect—to extend and enlarge the institutions of the country, so as to render them commensurate with its increasing numbers, instruction, and intelligence—to enable them, as far as it is consistent with human nature, to comprehend within their scope all classes and conditions of men—and to insure their permanence by freeing them from reproach, and rendering them more powerful and efficient for those purposes which they are intended to promote.

The *Times* reprinted this speech, commending its moderation and discretion, in not explaining or confirming any

of the rumours afloat regarding the late events, and advocating the propriety of giving the new administration, if one should be formed, a fair trial. The Duke told Greville that "no man could have acted more like a gentleman and a man of honour than Melbourne did; and that his opinion of him was greatly raised."* Yet the Clerk of the Council does not scruple to say that "Melbourne could not have given an exact account of what had passed (at Brighton), and that if he had told *all*, his colleagues would probably have thought he had abandoned their interests."† He represents Duncannon as out of temper with his brother-in-law for condoning, as he thought he had done in his speech at Melbourne, the affront put upon the Liberal party by their summary ejection from power; and imagines that he so far prevailed by his remonstrances as to induce the ex-Premier to change his tone when replying a week later to an address from Derby. The terms of the latter speech best confute the charge.

I thank you, gentlemen, cordially for this address—I thank you for the sentiments which it expresses—I thank you for the spirit which it breathes—I thank you for its prudence, temperance, and wisdom. With respect to the recent public events which are the immediate cause of your doing me the honour to meet me here upon the present occasion, you are all well aware that the death of the late Earl Spencer deprived us, at one blow, of our leader in the House of Commons and of our Chancellor of the Exchequer. You are all well aware that when the Government was constituted in its present form in July last, it was mainly grounded upon the weight and influence possessed by Lord Althorp (now Earl Spencer) in the Lower House of Parliament; and allow me here for one moment to say that in nothing did that House of Commons, which possesses many and just claims to the

* Memoirs, November 28th, 1834, iii. p. 164.

† Ibid., December 6th, 1834, iii. pp. 166 and 170.

public confidence and esteem, display a more enlightened regard for the public interest, or a more clear and sagacious insight into character, than in duly appreciating the manly integrity, the inflexible honesty, the straightforward sense and the noble simplicity which belong to and distinguish my noble friend; and the merit of that House in attaching itself as it did to him, as their guide and leader, is, in my view, greatly increased by the absence of those more specious and splendid qualities which have been generally supposed to be absolutely necessary for the conduct of public affairs in large popular assemblies. Upon this event taking place, with the results which I have already stated, it became my duty to take his Majesty's pleasure as to whether he would command me to make arrangements for filling up the vacancies which had been thus occasioned, and his Majesty was pleased to come to the determination that he would not impose upon me that duty, but would resort to other advisers. This is the short and simple statement of the facts which have actually taken place. You will observe that in making these statements, I am revealing no secrets; they are necessarily evident and public of themselves, because they rest upon facts which are publicly known to have taken place upon the death of Lord Spencer, and upon the dismissal of the late administration and the appointment of another in its place. I owe it here to as gracious a Sovereign as ever minister had the honour and satisfaction of serving, to declare that in coming to this determination I believe his Majesty to have intended no personal slight to any man. It was a decision of great public importance, and therefore to be made on public grounds alone. You will observe that his Majesty would not have discharged his duty, if he had permitted personal considerations, or a respect to personal feelings, to have influenced him at such a crisis. An event of this magnitude, taking place in this manner, suddenly, unexpectedly, in the midst of the vacation, when the public

mind was, as I believe, in a state of perfect contentment and repose, necessarily produced a great and immediate general sensation, and, as was to be expected, every rumour was caught at, reports were fabricated, guess and conjecture were resorted to, for the purpose of giving a narrative and explanation of the circumstances which had taken place. It is in the nature of a public press, and I therefore do not complain of it, that its conductors, in order to gratify the curiosity of their readers, and to advance the interests of the particular political parties to which they are attached, should resort to invention, and assertion, and should seize almost upon any means within their reach, which could enable them to profess to furnish information of what took place in the audiences with which I was honoured by his Majesty at Brighton. I may be misled by my own particular feelings, but I think that they have somewhat, in the present instance, exceeded the latitude and licence which ought always to be allowed them. As far as I have read those statements and representations they are all erroneous and not to be relied upon; the facts which they assert are for the most part entirely false and without foundation; and where there is any admixture of truth, it is so disguised and perverted, so mutilated and imperfect, so altered by the addition of fiction, and so divested of limitation and qualification, as to be almost more calculated to deceive and mislead even than falsehood itself. It has been affirmed, and that in publications of weight and authority, that the late Cabinet was dissolved, not by the determination of his Majesty, but its own internal divisions; that there existed such dissentient and contradictory opinions as must necessarily have led to its early, if not its immediate, dissolution. I seize this opportunity of giving to this assertion a clear, distinct, emphatic denial. There were in that Cabinet shades of opinion, as there always must be amongst men who think and act freely and conscientiously; but there was no such difference of

opinion upon great impending public measures as was likely to interefere with the harmonious and united action of that Administration. It would detain me too long, and my strength would hardly suffice, if I were to enter, in any detail, into the causes of the late events. You will not consider me as employing the language of complaint and discontent, but rather that of friendly admonition and advice, if I enumerate amongst them the want of confidence which has often been expressed in quarters from which we expected support,—the strong condemnation which has been pronounced upon some of our measures, which I conceive to have been absolutely necessary,—the violent and subversive opinions which have been declared, and particularly the bitter hostility and ulterior designs against the Established Church, which have been openly avowed by several classes and bodies of the Dissenters. When I mention this last opinion, I beg leave to say that I do not condemn those who conscientiously entertain it. It is not my opinion; but I mention it now with reference to its actual effect upon the course of public affairs. These sentiments and this conduct occasioned great alarm in high and powerful quarters; they terrified the timid, they repelled from us the wavering, they rallied men around the institutions which they conceived to be attacked, and they gave life, spirit, and courage, to our political adversaries, who, you will recollect, after all, form a very large and powerful party in this country—a party powerful in number, powerful in property, powerful in rank and station, and allow me to add, a party of a very decided, tenacious, unyielding and uncompromising character. You, I know, are stronger than they are; you are strong in sense and spirit; you are strong in reason and justice, in instruction and inquiry, in the general sympathy and fellow feeling of the community; but you are not strong enough to concede these advantages to your opponents, whilst you subject yourselves to the weakness which arises from division,

dissension, and discord. Some observation is made in this address upon the supposed delay of the late Government in bringing forward measures of reformation. I know that this has been made a fruitful topic of public animadversion. I think, however, there has been some misapprehension upon this subject, and I must in justice say, that if there had been delay, I know not that I could have accepted for it that excuse and apology which is offered in the present address. I say nothing of ecclesiastical reformation; but with respect to legal, commercial, and even municipal reformation, I cannot in fairness say that measures of that character would have met with the obstacles to which allusion is made. The questions, I presume, which are supposed to be unnecessarily procrastinated, are those of the united Church of England and Ireland, and of the Municipal Corporations. The first is a great, important, and most difficult question; no step could be taken upon it until full and accurate information had been obtained upon the actual state of religion and the religious establishments in that country. Means had been taken, as you well know, to obtain that information in the most ample and satisfactory manner, and when once that information has been obtained, no further delay would have taken place in framing upon it such a measure as would have amended obvious and indefensible errors, and have tended to the strengthening and promoting the Protestant religion in that part of his Majesty's dominions. The same observation applies to the second subject. In the Municipal Corporations nothing could be done until a complete examination into their actual state had taken place, and until the report of the Commission charged with this duty had been made and received by the Government. There is no subject upon which I feel a more anxious interest; there is none which more urgently demands the serious consideration of Parliament. I do not mean to speak with either disrespect or severity of the per-

sons who compose those Corporations: I believe in many instances they have acted with integrity; and where they have erred their errors are to be attributed to their having been subjected to a temptation which human nature cannot resist—the temptation of irresponsible and unexamined power. Great abuses have, I believe, been discovered; but the abuses with respect to property are as nothing compared to the social evil of which the Corporations, as at present constituted, are the origin and the cause. As Secretary of State I have had experience of their effects, and in my opinion the discord, the dissension, the sedition, the jealousy, enmity and heartburnings which they create and nourish, are the principal obstacles to the due enforcement of the law and the steady maintenance of the public tranquillity. It would be an insult, which I will not offer to you, if I were to recommend you to confine yourselves to constitutional objects and constitutional means. Such I know to be your principles and intentions. All that you wish to effect, all that ought to be effected, may be safely brought about by legal and orderly proceedings. If, which may God avert and forefend, discord and dissension should unhappily arise between any of the branches of the legislature, or any of the parts which compose the body politic of this country; if they should depart from that agreement and coherence in which they ought to act harmoniously and cordially for the benefit and advantage of the whole, depend upon it, that party, whichever it may be, which first exceeds the limits of its legal and constitutional jurisdiction, and particularly that party which first resorts to violence, injustice, cruelty, persecution, will ultimately fail in the contest, and will diminish and curtail that power and authority which it has sought unwarrantably, injuriously, iniquitously to increase and extend.

Eager and angry partisanship still bubbled over with wrath at the late Premier's attitude and tone. He did not talk like a man who had been turned out unexpectedly

and without cause. He was not, it was murmured and muttered, up to the mark of leadership of the popular party. Had it been Durham, how would he have fumed and threatened. Even among colleagues there were some whose vexation could not help finding vent in friendly sarcasms at his fine-gentlemanly airs of phlegm. All this he simply laughed at as childish petulance or irrational rhodomontade. In his mind the case was clear, one of dignified reticence too plain for controversy. The Liberal party had been in power four years by the will of the nation and the acquiescence of the King. His Majesty had withdrawn his acquiescence, suddenly conceiving the nation to have changed its mind. If it had, the Whigs ought to be out of office; and whoever meant the contrary meant disloyalty to parliamentary government. So did not he; and if the House of Commons when it assembled should vote approval of the conduct of the King, he for one felt bound to obey that decision. But if Parliament, as he believed, would declare that William IV. had made an egregious blunder, the Liberal party would return to power lawfully and inevitably, and in that case the fewer hard things said in the meantime the better. As for personal ill-usage, he utterly disdained complaint. He had never sought the Premiership; had never schemed or sighed for it; had never been suspected of putting himself forward as a competitor for its attainment. But having been named by the King, accepted by the party, and supported by the House of Commons, it was not for him to scold or brawl because a weak and whimsical prince imagined that he knew best how little the party cared for their chief or how much the country wanted to be rid of him. If either were true, how unworthy and undignified would it be in him to contest the matter. The existing House of Commons had in no instance rejected his advice or intimated their distrust of him; the House of Commons about to be elected might or might not indicate its wish to have another Premier. But the first quality of fitness to hold the Treasurer's staff was to show that you did not think it worth stooping for. Let any one do so that liked; so would not he. His calm

and good-humoured silence during the three months that succeeded was the truest and highest wisdom; and did more to confirm his position in the mind of thinking men, and to disarm jealousy and antipathy in the breasts of others, than all the harangues faction could have uttered in his favour. Politically, his reserve was the clear course of a consistent, well-read, and thoughtful statesman; personally, it was the only course, under the circumstances, that became a high-minded gentleman. Its policy was plain enough to the far-sighted, though not manifest to the vulgar. If he was not again to be called to supreme power, the sooner his brief possession of the Premiership was forgotten the pleasanter; and if he was to be recalled to the royal closet, the less of humiliation his irritable master had to forget the greater would be his chance of regaining confidence and getting rid of difficulties and prejudices in the details of rule.

Sir Robert Peel made his first offer to Mr. Stanley and his seceding friends, which being declined, he proceeded at once to constitute the administration out of the prominent members of his own party, irrespective of the prejudices and resentments which past divisions amongst them had caused. Lord Haddington, a bosom friend of Canning, was made Viceroy of Ireland, and Sir Edward Knatchbull, a leader of the mutiny which had overthrown the Duke in 1830, entered the Cabinet as Paymaster of the Forces. It may be that there really was no great room for choice in the colour of the materials of which the new Government was to be composed; but the absence of new men of mark or proved ability created necessarily the impression that, after four years of progress and organic change, the executive was about to revert substantially to what it had been before. Practically this decided the great issue about to be left to the new constituency.

The Seceders had not yet actually quarrelled with Melbourne, from whom in fact they differed on one point of legislation only. Lord Auckland in his gossipping letters of December says: "I am glad to hear that Stanley met

Melbourne at Trentham, and that there was all cordiality and good-fellowship between them;" and in the following week he says: "Melbourne passed through town well and in good spirits on his way to Goodwood," where he was to spend the Christmas.* The Duke of Richmond had on quitting office taken his seat on the cross benches in the Lords, and he continued to occupy the same position for several years after.

Under the auspices of Lord Durham, an election committee sat to promote the return of candidates disposed to favour his pretensions to leadership. Charles Buller, Ward, Grote, Duncombe, Warburton, and others adhered to his standard, on which they were prepared to display, as soon as might be deemed prudent, household suffrage, ballot, and Church reform. Their doctrine was that the Court had been tempted by want of resolution to cashier the late Cabinet; and that the country was ready to elect a new House of Commons with a Liberal majority strong enough to mark a new point of departure on the path of democratic progress. The old chiefs must be got rid of, and younger men placed in their room. These, on the other hand, estimated very differently the tendencies of the time. They believed that a powerful reaction had set in, difficult to withstand, and only possible with great prudence and caution to surmount. To them the notion of a Durham administration seemed too chimerical to be seriously deprecated; but they recognised the vigour, earnestness, and talent of the younger politicians who clustered round the ambitious Earl, and cheerfully aided them in the contest they were about to fight on the extreme left of the Liberal line. By some of the older members of the party this co-operation excited jealousy; and distrust was here and there felt as to how far the former chief of the administration might be prevailed upon to yield pretensions or principles. In answer to inquiries on this head, towards the close of December, Melbourne wrote from Goodwood to Spring Rice:—

* December 11th and 19th, 1834.

I was much rejoiced to hear so good an account of your election prospects. I hope they continue to be of the same character. I have not taken much cognisance of what is going on at Cleveland Row, despairing of being able to manage or control. The fact is that these matters are in the hands of those who from the commencement of the late administration pursued the system which necessarily led to its downfall. I thought it my duty, both to the King and to that part of the country which had supported us, to do my utmost to keep the Government or any part of it as long as possible. We now stand upon new ground, and if ever called upon again, I have a right to consider afresh upon what principles and with whom as associates I will re-engage in the public service.

To Lord Lansdowne he wrote somewhat later:—

I should have liked very much to come to you from Goodwood, but my brother arrived in town, which made me hurry up. If I can arrange it, I should wish very much to come and see you before the meeting of Parliament; this cannot now take place until the end of February at soonest. Political affairs assume a serious aspect. These appeals from the King to the people against the existing House of Commons can only be justified by decisive success. If the ministry who tries it fails, they lay the Crown prostrate at the feet of the majority. All those of our side who concern themselves in the elections say that they will go much against the Ministry, and much in favour of the Radical party, who, as I am told, are conducting themselves for the present with judgment and moderation. You cannot, I am sure, be doing otherwise than thinking seriously, constantly, and anxiously upon the course which is to be pursued. But nothing can be definitely settled until we see the character and complexion of the new House of Commons, upon which all depends.*

* From South Street, December 29th, 1834.

CHAPTER III.

CHIEF OF OPPOSITION.

Parliament of 1835—*Contest for the Speakership*—*Confidential Correspondence*—*Personal Characteristics*—*The Peel Administration overthrown.*

A NEW purpose was already formed within the breast of Melbourne. He had now a motive to seek power he had never had before. If it had never come he would have lived on contentedly without it; but having been Prime Minister, and having been summarily and arbitrarily dismissed, he was resolved to try whether he could not reverse the decree, and reassert once for all the old Whig principle that without the assent of Parliament, Government in England there should not be.

The first days of the opening year were occupied with the general election. The City returned four Liberals, including the Governor of the Bank; the lowest on the list being fourteen hundred ahead of the highest Conservative. In the whole metropolis there was not a single ministerialist. Dublin and Edinburgh, Glasgow and Coventry, Newcastle and Birmingham, Manchester and Salford, Sheffield and Wolverhampton pronounced an equally emphatic condemnation of the recent change of ministry, and many other manufacturing and commercial towns did the same. On the other hand, the English and Welsh counties for the most part chose supporters of Sir Robert Peel.

On all sides Melbourne was pressed to make what a

Spaniard would have called a *pronunciamiento*; what Durham called unfurling a new flag; what Tom Duncombe called showing what trumps he held. This was exactly what Melbourne would not do. Reflection, and conference with the few whose judgment really influenced his own, confirmed him in the conviction that the thing worth doing, before and above all other things, was to reverse the proceeding of the 14th of November, whereby a misguided sovereign had been betrayed into an error which, if not retrieved betimes, would lead him and his house to irretrievable ruin. He did not want any personal redress, for he felt no resentment. He did not wish for democratic triumph over misjudging royalty, for he was to the core a Whig. He thought the situation far too critical for splashy or speculative explanations. New circumstances and new exigencies would require the framing of new measures; but he saw no necessity for hoisting new party banners, and he thought the first duty and the best policy was simply to repel what he deemed an unconstitutional exercise of power, by inviting Parliament to tell the Crown its nominees did not possess their confidence, and that they would not have men so appointed to rule over them. Lighter heads took very different views. Various sections wished for a new point of departure in the path of organic reform; Whig country gentlemen like Mr. Robert Gordon held out hopes on the hustings that the malt tax would be swept away; and May Fair Radicals like Hobhouse wished it to be understood that their junction with the Whigs last year had been conditional on a change of system in Ireland, guarantees for which they had exacted and were prepared now to enforce. Melbourne was not surprised that some of his old colleagues should be annoyed at such speeches; but he had in his mental composition what few of them had in theirs, that which in the great Stadholder was called phlegm; without which he could never have accomplished the definite aim on which he had made up his mind. He had as little notion of being bullied by

reckless adherents into pretending aquiescence in their assertions as he had of quarrelling with them for their folly. In private he rated them soundly for their absurdities; in public he stared with an amused air at any one who tried to identify him with them.

Hobhouse says that his speech is misreported as it stands; some statements in it are erroneous; and those which are correct are made in such a manner as to produce a false impression. With respect to the Coercion Bill, it was settled on the very formation of the late Government that the three first clauses were to be abandoned. This is all that was said upon the subject, and they certainly were not given up, as his speech would imply, at his suggestion, or rather on his demand. But what can be done? He has been spoken to upon the subject, but says that the whole report is incorrect, that you cannot set one part of it right without admitting the rest. Speaking confidentially, I should fear that it is not so very different from what he really said, and that therefore it will not do to contradict nor of course to retract it.

Men, when they speak upon such delicate subjects, should give themselves the trouble to beware that the report of what they say should be correct. Gordon wrote to me almost immediately, expressing his regret for the speech he had made at Cricklade, admitting that it went much too far, and attributing his having done so to the extreme excitement under which he spoke. It is true that he had often represented to me strongly the necessity of repealing the malt tax; but it is not true that I had given such a notion the least countenance, or encouraged him to expect that it would be done, whereas certainly the speech leaves it to be inferred, if it does not positively affirm, that I had agreed to the measure.*

The final result of the general election reached him

* From South Street, January 30th, 1835.

at Brocket before the middle of January. Without the Seceders a majority variously estimated at from five-and-twenty to forty had been returned, pledged to oppose the Peel Administration. The demand instantly arose that on their assembling they should assert their predominance by naming a new Speaker. Who was likely to concentrate with fewest defections the strength of the Liberal party? Lansdowne wrote to Spring Rice:—

I conclude everybody will be agreed that it would be highly inexpedient to disturb the present Speaker without a certainty of success. I am quite satisfied from all the circumstances attending the present moment that certainty would be more within reach in the event of your being the candidate than in that of any other person, and might be calculated without difficulty when the season for determination comes; neither can there be any sufficient reason why, if the present inclination of your mind is confirmed on reflection (and I feel the weight of all the considerations to which you refer), you should not avail yourself of what would at any time be an honourable distinction, and which would come to you enhanced by the peculiarity of the case, the free choice of the House, and its being consistent with your political principles and connections. I will not conceal from you that I should consider this change in your situation, though I know it would be attended with none in your public views, as a political and personal loss. . . . But it is impossible to be useful in all senses, and I am far from adverting to this because I think it should affect your decision, but because I am unwilling to withhold from you a thought that occurs to me.*

On the same day Melbourne wrote:—

I received yours of the 13th instant with the inclosure yesterday at Brocket Hall. I should have answered it

* From Bowood, January 16th, 1835.

by return of post, but as I expected Mulgrave down from London, and as he had been consulting with some of our friends upon this very subject, I thought it better to delay replying to you until after I had seen him. I had before heard that you would not be disinclined to undertake the office of Speaker; and I had already written to John Russell to say that if that were your mind it appeared to me both that your claims upon the party and your own qualifications were such as at once to supersede those of any other person. I continue entirely of that opinion. Whether you act prudently or not in coming to this conclusion, it is for yourself to determine; that depends so much upon one's own views and feelings, that it is impossible for one man to decide for another on such a question. There is one point of view in which I certainly deeply regret it, and that is, when I consider that it involves the loss of your active service and assistance in the House of Commons, and I must feel this the more heavily from the general concurrence of our opinions, and because I am no more prepared than yourself to go to that extent of change to which many have most unwisely and unnecessarily thought proper to pledge themselves.*

Spencer, Holland, Palmerston, and Auckland indicated a like preference; "and in all the communications he had held regarding the Speakership, Earl Grey uniformly expressed his opinion that his claims were superior to those of any other candidate, whoever he might be."† A numerous section, however, of the more advanced politicians leaned rather to the nomination of Abercromby. The suggestion of his name originated, not as was frequently supposed with the Duke of Devonshire or Lord Durham, but with Lord John Russell. Two days after their dismissal in November, Melbourne agreed with the new

* From Panshanger, January 16th, 1835.

† Earl Grey to T. S. Rice, February 6th, 1835.

leader that Abercromby should be asked if he would take the Speakership. He was not then aware that Spring Rice desired the office. The offer was neither accepted or refused. Some time after Abercromby wrote to Melbourne declining. On this Lord John communicated confidentially with Spring Rice and Palmerston, but at the time to no one else.* It was generally supposed that Lord John favoured the selection of Abercromby and the Radical press daily insisted on his preferential worthiness for the distinguished post, and deprecated the nomination of his competitor as a man less advanced in Liberalism. Paragraphs appeared ascribing the counter movement to O'Connell's resentment against his chief antagonist in the Repeal debate of April 1834; but the contrary appears from the report of an election speech, in which he declared that "he would cheerfully and willingly vote for Mr. Rice were he proposed for the situation of Speaker."

While matters were in doubt a letter from Lord John found its way into print expressing his readiness to support Abercromby. Spring Rice, disappointed and offended, wrote asking if the preference must not be recognised as an indication that men of moderate opinions were henceforth to be set aside, whatever their services or standing might be. Lord John replied:—

I have received your letter with great concern. But as I am going to Bowood on Tuesday, I can there talk the matter over with Lord Lansdowne. I will say little more at present. Let me assure you, however, that while I shall feel myself bound to attend to your wishes, unless the strongest interests of the country intervene, I see no such danger of your becoming singular and obnoxious, as you seem to apprehend. On the contrary, I looked to you for advice and counsel, that we might act in all things together, and keep aloof from any organic changes which might be dangerous to the constitution. †

* Subsequent letter from Woburn, February 4th, 1835.

† From Lord John Russell, January 18th, 1835.

To make mischief among comrades, is part of the every-day tactics, at all times, of an opposite party. On the first mention of Abercromby's name as a candidate for the chair, the Ministerial organs offered their condolence to Spring Rice, for being unceremoniously thrown overboard by the new leader of Opposition, either to propitiate O'Connell, who was said to be implacable in his enmity, or to please the Duke of Devonshire, of whose rental Abercromby had for some years acted as auditor. There can be little doubt that these taunts and sneers, kept up day after day in every variety of phrase, were not wholly without effect. Lord Limerick did not conceal his indignation at his son-in-law being jockeyed, as he supposed, and numerous allusions in private correspondence at the time betrayed the same suspicion of some species of intrigue. A frank and confidential letter to Spring Rice himself from Lord John early in January gives the true history of the transaction, and shows how groundless were these insinuations:—

On the dissolution of the late ministry I asked Abercromby whether he was disposed to accept the Speakership if Sutton left the chair. He did not seem disinclined, but has since expressed his intention not to accept. I hope he has not finally determined. But at all events I think we ought not to elect Sutton after his late conduct. I shall be very glad to hear from you on the subject, and I hope you will warn any new members you see against pledging themselves to Sutton. But supposing Abercromby to decline, who is the fittest man? I should say either C. Ferguson or Bonham Carter; but I have no decided opinion.*

Earl Spencer could not refuse his sympathy and advice to old friends because he was determined to keep aloof from the fray, and his obligations to the former Secretary of the Treasury were too many and too recent to be forgotten.

* From Torquay, January 9th, 1835.

I only got your letter last night, or I would have answered it before, having no difficulty or doubt about how it was to be answered. If Abercromby had been in the field, there might have been some embarrassment, but, he being out of the way, I can conceive no one whose claim upon the whole Liberal party is so great as yours. I am surprised, I own, that you should choose to lower yourself to so fameless an office as that of Speaker, standing as high as you do at the present time. But if that is your choice no one else can have anything to say against it. The only objection any man could make to you is that you have too much sense to carry on the humbug of the chair without occasionally laughing; for though a necessary humbug, still it is a humbug. Addington and Abbot made better Speakers than Sutton, because they had less sense, and Lord Grenville made a much worse one, I believe, because he had more. You are clearly the man who will combine the greatest amount of support of any one who can be proposed.*

The result of the conference at Bowood was that Lord John wrote as follows :—

After the letters from Althorp and Melbourne which you have sent to Lord Lansdowne, and your reply to me, I can have no longer any doubt in saying that your election to the chair will have all the support I can give. I should offer to propose you, but that I think Abercromby a better person, and I advise you to write to him immediately, quoting, if you please, my opinion to this effect. At the same time, I do not withdraw a grain of the regret which your separation from active politics does and will cause me. I shall write to Ebrington and two or three more without delay.†

Up to this time Spring Rice uniformly began his letters

* From Wiseton, January 18th, 1835.

† From Bowood, January 22nd, 1835.

to Lansdowne "My dear Lord." His friend grew tired of the formality, and concluded an epistle of more than ordinary confidence and kindness with a playful expression of jealousy, and a "hope that he would in future mend his ways." The rejoinder began—

MY DEAR LANSDOWNE,

Is this what you meant by amending my ways? I wish all reforms were as agreeable and as easy, as one which at your desire marks as sincere and earnest an attachment as one man can feel towards another. If, as you say, you were jealous of me, I shall expect my wife and children to be jealous next, for outside the very inmost circle, there is no one to whose counsel and efficient friendship I owe so much as to yours, and believe me in warm attachment to you it is repaid. As usual, you greatly over-estimate me under the peculiar circumstances of the present moment. I cannot for the life of me cry Durham and *Real* Reform, and I am sure I would not have had self-control enough to avoid a regular fight with some of those among whom we shall have to sit.

After regretting the alienation of Stanley, and hoping to be instrumental in the reconciliation of those who should never have parted, he apologizes for inclosing a letter from Macaulay which spoke confidently of his future position as a leader of their party. The letter concludes with the following:—"We see a good deal here of the Duchess of Kent and our future queen. I never saw a child who had more the appearance of being naturally brought up."*

To Spring Rice Melbourne wrote on the 21st:—

The copy of your letter to Lord Spencer with which you furnished me I sent to Duncannon, and therefore I have it not to refer to; but if I recollect its contents aright, I gathered from them that you would not be inclined to

* Letter to Lord Lansdowne, Hastings, January 20th, 1835.

urge your wishes if Abercromby should consent to be proposed for the chair of the House of Commons. I think it right to tell you that, under this impression, and in consequence of the strongest possible representations received from many of our friends, I have thought it right to press again upon Abercromby, the propriety of reconsidering his determination. The feeling expressed upon this subject was so strong that I could not resist it. I have little expectation that he will be inclined to alter his resolution, and in that case I have already told you that it is my strong opinion that you should be brought forward as our candidate. Believe me,

Yours ever faithfully, &c. &c.

P.S. The feeling amongst our friends to which I have adverted above, was expressed positively in favour of Abercromby in the first instance, and without reference to you or any other person who might otherwise be thought of.*

Lansdowne wrote on the same day:—

Since I wrote to you John Russell arrived here, and we have spent much time in talking over the subject of our correspondence and other public matters. I feel myself forced to the conclusion, and turning the question over in every way, that if the situation to which you have so strong a claim is placed within your reach, and you determine upon taking it, it will not be possible to make an administration out of the materials of the late Government, or, indeed, to keep its elements together as a party independent of office. What the effects of this may be under present circumstances, or what resources may be found for supplying the vacancy which the inevitable fall of this Government will create, you can judge at least as well as I can, but you will feel with me that it is necessary to look at all the consequences of any important step that is taken at the present crisis. I conclude John Russell will write to you himself to-day,

* From Panshanger, January 21st, 1835.

but I could not avoid stating the whole view that I take of the case after considering it with him in all its bearings. Hobhouse's Nottingham speech increased difficulties by the offence I know it has given to some and is calculated to give to others. Indeed I do not understand it as a statement of facts.*

Lord John was equally frank and friendly:—

I am very sorry to put any bar in the way of any wishes of yours, but after a long conversation with Lord Lansdowne I think it right to lay before you the following considerations. The Whig party has of late been much weakened by the secession of Stanley and Graham. It has been obliged to bear the loss of Macaulay and R. Grant. Your talents for business, for council, for parliamentary debate, make you of inestimable consequence to the party now deprived, besides other losses, of Althorp in the House of Commons. To come to particulars, Lord Lansdowne looks upon you as the member of the House most capable from power and inclination of representing his opinions, and he doubts whether it be possible to construct the administration on principles similar to the last if you cannot form part of the arrangement. My own feelings are not very different. I have no disposition to be towed out to sea farther than the late ministry were inclined to go. I know not what I may find myself asked to do, without having a friend and colleague to join me in resistance. Of course I would then decline any longer acting with the party, but this is not a remedy I should like to apply. I feel how unpleasant it is to state these reasons to you; but Lord Lansdowne and I am both of us too much impressed with their importance to conceal them from you. Until I received your letter I was entirely ignorant of your wishes. Carter and Ferguson were only mentioned by me as themes to comment upon. I believe Bernal would

* Private and confidental from Bowood to T. S. Ricc, January 21st, 1835.

be a better candidate than either. But I have no hesitation in stating that you would be infinitely more acceptable to the great majority of the House than any of the three. Manners Sutton it is quite clear must not be allowed to walk over. Having stated these reflections, I wish you seriously to consider them, and let me know your decision as soon as possible.*

Stanley on the day following wrote :—

Your communication on the subject of the Speaker's chair is almost, if not quite, the first I have heard from any one upon the subject; and I therefore have more difficulty in answering you than I should have had with more knowledge of the facts and of the views and opinions of other parties; but such as my opinion is, I will not hesitate to give it you frankly and plainly, and trust to your friendship and candour not to misinterpret me. I fully enter into the various motives stated in your letter to Althorp which at the present moment naturally tend to strengthren your former wish to be placed in the chair; and I own that I was a good deal surprised to find from John Russell's note that your wish had not been more generally made known to your late colleagues, after the explanation which took place on your acceptance of the Colonial Office: that it was not is clear, or John Russell could not have made the suggestion which he did. You sacrificed your own views for the purpose of strengthening Lord Grey's Government, and had therefore, and as I conceive have, a right to look for their co-operation when your acceptance of a Cabinet office is not, as it was then, essential to them. They must know also that as a mere party question your name would give them infinitely more strength than either of those who were suggested to you, probably more than any that could be suggested; and I think it probable, without the least flattery, that from personal regard and private friendship, as well as from

* From Bowood, January 21st, 1835.

public character and station, you would unite in your favour a greater number of votes apart from party considerations than any other name in the House. I will add frankly that for myself there is no one in whose favour I should give a more cordial or a more conscientious vote. But with all this, I am bound to say I wish it could be that you should not be brought forward, now at least, unless Manners Sutton should retire. I am perhaps not sufficiently acquainted with all the facts of the case, but I own I cannot bring myself to think that the fact of his having acted (after the dissolution of the late Government, and not in the discharge of any of his official duties) even zealously, if you will, in furtherance of the principles which we know him to profess can of itself be a sufficient reason to justify us who, knowing his principles, pressed him to remain in his situation, in now turning round and rejecting him. This being my opinion, my present strong impression is that if he should again be brought forward as a candidate I should feel myself bound to support him against any new man; and I need not, I am sure, say that I should do so with the most unfeigned reluctance if you were his competitor. I think I can say with at least equal strength that my inclination and my judgment would alike lead me to support your claims in opposition to those of any untried man of either party, either now or whenever Manners Sutton may resign; and forgive me if I say that I think it would be more honourable and more agreeable to yourself to owe your election to the general opinion of the House that you were the fittest person for the office, than to a party movement for the purpose of trying at the earliest possible opportunity the relative strength of the Government and the Opposition. I know not whether you will share in this feeling or whether you will concur in the general view which I take, but I am sure you will give me credit for the sincerity of my motives, and not attribute the line I am disposed to take to any lukewarmness of regard towards yourself, on the contrary, I feel

satisfied that it would be the line which would be the best calculated to promote your ultimate object, and that in the manner the most satisfactory to yourself. I need not say that all I have written is written confidentially and intended for yourself alone.*

Another letter followed from his greatest friend :—

I need scarcely say that I had not received your inclosures from Melbourne and Spencer when I wrote yesterday. I have shown them to John Russell, and lose no time in returning them. Although I can see nothing (I wish I could) to alter our view of the matter, there can be but one feeling amongst your friends, personal and political, that your wishes should govern their conduct, and so thinks John Russell, with whom I have talked it all over again this morning. His views are moderate and rational, but by whom is he to be supported in them? My friend Auckland, with many excellent qualities, is a great deal too much disposed to bend to opinion, the extent and force of which he is prone to exaggerate both to himself and to others.†

To his surprise, Lord John found on the 23rd of January that things had taken a different turn :—

On my arrival in town last night, I received a note from Melbourne informing me of his final application to Abercromby. What has happened to make him take this step I do not exactly know, but of course everything must be suspended, as you say, till A.'s answer arrives. I go to Brocket to-morrow, and to Woburn Abbey on Monday, to stay as long as I am allowed.‡

When Abercromby seemed to shrink from the contest,

* Private and confidential from Knowsley, January 22nd, 1835.
† From Bowood to T. S. Rice, January 23rd, 1835.
‡ From Queen Street, January 24th, 1835.

other names were suggested. Mr. Bernal was generally popular, and had had great experience of business in committee; but he was a West India merchant, and the Whigs would have a country gentleman, or a jurist of high standing. Then there was Graham, who his old colleagues feared was likely to join their antagonists; he would look the character to perfection, and in pomp of talk it would be difficult to find his equal. But it would be in vain to ask the party to unite in his favour: the attempt was not even made. More hopeless still would it have been to nominate Littleton, whose disastrous error of the previous session was still fresh in everybody's recollection except Lord Wellesley's and his own. These circumstances rendered any idea of the kind impossible. But this Littleton did not appear to feel. Duncannon had the disagreeable office of telling him the state of the case, while Melbourne wrote to his father-in-law.*

On the 27th Lord John wrote:—

> Melbourne, who is here, has heard nothing yet from A. having written to Edinburgh. Are you sure that Dan and his men would support you, West Briton as you are? In the meantime I send you a letter to which, if you care to be Speaker, I shall require an answer from your own chair. It was written the day I left Bowood.†

On the 28th the same correspondent informed Spring Rice of Abercromby's acceptance: "I know you will be very sorry; but I cannot think you had so well chosen for yourself as your friends are able to do." Spring Rice could only acquiesce in a decision which he felt to be approved of thoroughly, not only for the party's sake, but for his own, by his best friends. He was nevertheless mortified at the way in which his hopes and desires had been played with, as he imagined, by Melbourne; and he indicated not obscurely

* Lord Duncannon, from Ampthill Park, January 26th, 1835.

† From Woburn, January 27th, 1835.

that he was disposed in his vexation to stand aloof. The date as published of Lord John's letter to Abercromby appearing to be the same as that on which he had written to him from Woburn, with Melbourne by his side, in which he still treated him as the probable candidate of the Whigs, was indeed hard to be understood, and he said plainly that he did not understand it. The formal letter of invitation was, in point of fact, written in London on the 29th, after Abercromby had promised to accept, and not at Woburn on the 27th, while his acceptance was still regarded as improbable. But Abercromby was given leave to modify any phrase he might deem important; and for some reason unexplained, he had put back the date two days, unconscious of what the change might imply, and Lord John first saw the alteratian when he read it in the *Globe*.

> You use a very mild term, he added, when you speak of *reserve*. Had my letter been written on the 27th, I should have been guilty of treachery towards you; but when I wrote you on the 27th I was persuaded Abercromby would decline, and it was only on that view I sent you the letter. I am sorry you were kept in uncertainty, but you now know that I had nothing to do with it. I think Melbourne regretted it likewise, but having written again to Abercromby, he was obliged to stand to what he had written. I do not like to promise for another occasion, but this I may say, that I think your promotion to the Chair at present would have, to a great degree, separated Lord Lansdowne from the party, and in that case I should have begged to be considered as a single member of Parliament. Abercromby would not have taken my place, and the whole concern would have gone to pieces.*

There was more balm in this than in a volume of commonplace compliment. Nor was this all. Next day he wrote at greater length, and even more explicitly, enumerating every step of the transaction, from his own original sug-

* From Woburn, February 3rd, 1835.

gestion in November, with accurate regard to dates and incidents.

On the morrow he again recapitulated the substance of the correspondence, and asked how could he have acted otherwise. Many had assured him that they thought Abercromby had a better chance than any one else. C. Wood gave that opinion decidedly. "But if not on the Speakership, what other question is there in which you should feel any estrangement from us? I say all this because I feel that if you do not assist us in council and debate I shall be obliged to call our friends together a fortnight after Parliament meets, and desire each man to find his own leader as he best can. I have stated all this to you very plainly, because I wish to continue on the most open and confidential terms with you, and I have no doubt you will meet it in the same spirit."* That Rice did so meet it the subsequent correspondence amply testifies. No word of irritation points to a suspicion of Melbourne having acted unworthily in the affair, and thenceforth the disappointed candidate co-operated loyally in promoting the success of his rival.

On the 30th Melbourne wrote fully explaining the history of the transaction:—

> You are probably already aware that Abercromby, upon receiving my letter and many others to the same effect, came up to town, as a speedy decision upon the question of the Chair was manifestly necessary. John Russell and myself also arrived here yesterday from Woburn. Upon the best information we could obtain, and the best consideration we could give to the subject, two conclusions appeared to us to be certain: the first, that in the present temper of our friends and supporters it was impossible to avoid taking steps to oppose the re-election of Sutton; and the second, that the question would, without doubt, be tried to the greatest advantage with Abercromby as

* From Woburn, February 4th, 1835.

the candidate. Great doubts are entertained whether it is possible to succeed against Sutton at all, and if this should upon further inquiry appear to be the probable result, feelings and passions may perhaps cool down, and men may be constrained to acquiesce in the course which would then undoubtedly be the most reasonable and politic. At present, however, there is no hope of conducting members to such a conclusion. It has therefore been determined that Abercromby should be declared a candidate, and that the most active means should be taken immediately to ascertain the opinions which exist upon the subject. I feel very much the force of your observation, that you wish you had been earlier informed of this possible contingency. I very much regret it, but for myself I really considered Abercromby's determination as quite final, and was only induced to renew the subject with him by the very strong and urgent solicitations to that effect which poured in upon me from all quarters. All your other remarks are correct, especially that it seems odd to force the office upon one friend who dislikes it and not to assist another who desires it. But you also say that success is the great object, and it does appear that of success Abercromby has the best chance.*

I am much obliged for your letter in answer to mine. It is quite satisfactory. I do not suppose that all the Moderates will support Abercromby as they would have supported you. But others will be more eager, and Morpeth, I am told, said he could vote for none but A. or Sutton.†

On the same day Lord Russell's letter requesting Abercromby to serve, with his reply accepting, appeared in the morning papers. Lord Limerick and other personal friends bitterly gave vent to their suspicions and their belief that the result had been compassed by intrigue.

* From South Street, January 30th, 1835.

† From Woburn, January 31st, 1835.

The selected candidate thus intimated his feelings on the event to his late rival:—

I have been forced into a position which is in many respects distressing to me, and in no respect more than from the belief that the Chair, if attainable for either of us, would have been agreeable to you. I pretend to nothing unusually generous. I felt, when Sutton was last elected, that, in the peculiar situation in which I then was, the Chair would have been to me a double object. That failing, I not only discarded it from my mind because the reasons which influenced me two years ago no longer existed, and because I should very much prefer in these times doing my duty as a member of Parliament, to being removed from an active share in politics. With these feelings fixed in my mind, I steadily refused Melbourne and all other persons who applied to me. I did not yield until Melbourne found himself so pressed that he could not refuse to urge me to reconsider my decision, and then it was that I came to London in the hope that I might by communication with others escape from that which I wished to avoid. I found all I could say unavailing, and I fear that I can only account by the habit that had been acquired of saying that I should have been a good candidate for the popular party, by the fear that your admirable speech on the Repeal of the Union might influence some of your countrymen, and by the regret that so many would have felt in seeing you removed from the power of assisting your friends by your efficiency in debate. This is the view that has occurred to me, and all I can say is that I sincerely regret having been forced forward, and I should feel it more deeply if I did not secretly believe that all opposition to Sutton is vain (if he promises), after his being in possession of the office, with his experience, and with the opportunities he has had of cultivating the opinion of the House. If I was unexpectedly to succeed it would be a source of

sincere regret to me. It would probably be the last chapter in my life, and not such a conclusion as I should desire. I do not mean to canvass or take any part myself, and I go back to Derbyshire by the mail to-night.*

Chief Justice Denman, knowing he could rely on the reticence of his old friend, whispered Spring Rice by post, "Don't you be proposed as Speaker. If I was an M.P. I would vote against you, since you are wanted for the thing, not the name. I have just been dining with the Chancellor at Serjeants' Inn. He talked of three hundred sure Tory votes, and not more than two hundred and twenty Whigs."† Such was Lord Lyndhurst's way of talking, which those who knew him well did not take to be meant literally; but the feeling of Lord Denman was expressed by many other friends with equal earnestness, that Opposition could ill afford at such a moment to consign one of their most reliable debaters to silence, or, as Lord Auckland said, by putting him in the Chair, to put him on the shelf.

I have heard from John Russell from Woburn on a still more important and delicate subject. Attempts have been making, as might be foreseen, to open much more confidential communication than I am sure is either desirable or safe in two different quarters which require the greatest caution. You will be glad to hear that he himself is disposed to resist them, and I have written to him in the strongest terms about it, as I think nothing would be so fatal as any entanglement with persons who have nothing in common with us, at least in ultimate objects. I have not time to copy any correspondence, but will show it you when we meet.‡

* A private leter from J. Abercromby to T. S. Rice, January 31st, 1835 (Fenton's Hotel).

† From Lord Denman, January 30th, 1835.

‡ Private and confidential from Bowood to T. S. Rice, February 1st, 1835.

A rumour was in circulation that O'Connell had sent over three names for Speaker, one of which must be chosen to win his support. Lord John Russell stated that he did not believe a word of it; for Duncannon had told him that O'Connell had written to him to say that he would vote for anybody the party should put up.

Lord Spencer's clear and disinterested judgment weighed more with Melbourne than that of any other man. That he had seldom now the benefit of its daily aid was indeed an unceasing cause of regret. He never volunteered advice after he had laid aside the duties of a leader; but he was always ready to tell his friends who asked him what he thought on a particular question, or how he would himself act in their position. About the Speakership, Lord Grey had doubts; but he had none. He had himself supported Manners Sutton's re-election in the late Parliament; but in the recent changes he thought he had forfeited his claim to confidence by the part he had taken, and he thought the new Parliament had a right to place another man in the chair. "The question was one of policy. If the Liberal party were confident that their opposition to his election would be successful, he should say certainly that it would be a very beneficial measure to oppose it."* At length it grew obvious that some resolution must be come to, and made generally known. Urgent letters were addressed to the chief of the party, still out of town, and the accounts of what followed can best be given in Melbourne's own words.

On Thursday last, being at Woburn, I received letters stating that the matter would brook no further delay, and urging me and John Russell to come up to town for the purpose of settling it, as Abercromby would come to no decision until he had seen us. We immediately started for London, and as a prompt declaration of our intentions was absolutely necessary, we determined the question in the course of the day, and I wrote to you by that night's

* From Wiseton, January 31st, 1835.

post. This unavoidable haste will account to you for your having received my letter and the announcement in the *Globe* at the same time. I am as much concerned as you can be about what has taken place; and am sensible of the inconvenience to which it subjects you, and I can assure you that I lament that you should be disappointed in an object which you so much wish to attain. The only consolation I feel is in the recollection that you will be left at liberty to undertake higher and more arduous duties; and if any of us should at any future time be called upon to advise the King, we shall have it in our power to avail ourselves of your valuable service and assistance. With respect to the success of the attempt, it is impossible to say anything until the sentiments of members are a little more ascertained. But I may say in confidence that those who are best acquainted with the House of Commons do not appear to consider it by any means so certain as you do. Some of our friends, they say, will vote for Sutton, and some will not vote against him. On the other hand, I am given to understand that he is by no means universally popular with his own party. John Russell showed me the letter which he wrote to you from Woburn. I do not distinctly recollect it. I thought it had only been for the purpose of ascertaining your general concurrence in the Irish Church measure. He knew then that I had written to Abercromby requesting him to reconsider his determination. I suppose the expressions which he used referred to the contingency which I then thought the most probable view, that Abercromby would persist in declining. I shall be very anxious to hear the opinion which you have written to Duncannon. I do not, of course, ask you what Stanley says, but if we could by any means learn the line which he is likely to pursue upon the question, it would be most important. You are mistaken in supposing that I derived my first information of John Russell's decision as to the Speakership from the *Globe*. I derived it from

the *Morning Chronicle.* I told you that if Abercromby was in the field, I thought there would be some difficulty, because though you are as little likely to be aware of it as anybody, there is such a thing in the world as selfishness. With respect to yourself, you will be much more useful out of the Chair than in it, and you will rise higher in everybody's estimation.*

The question of candidature being decided, Spring Rice wrote to Abercromby pledging his support; but frankly owning his disappointment, and gravely though gently complaining of the reticence he had observed. His old friend replied:—

You and I have now travelled the same road for many years, and I should be very sorry if anything should occur to separate us, or to promote any severance of feeling. Your letter has, for more reasons than one, given me pain, but I have no right to say one word that does not concern myself. I only wish to state to you how it happens that my name was changed very soon after we were dismissed. Lord Melbourne mentioned the chair to me; I gave no final answer; and I considered it fully after I came here, and upon the dissolution wrote to Lord Melbourne to say that I had made up my mind against it, and he, to use his own expression, took my answer as decisive. I was not at all aware that it was in the least an object to you, or that you had ever thought of it. The first I ever heard of it was from one of our late colleagues, who mentioned it in a letter urging me to come forward. In all the subsequent letters which I wrote in answer to those who applied to me, I always declined, and urged that they should press you into the service. I left no such letters unanswered, until the 25th of January, when I received a letter from Lord Melbourne, saying that he had been so pressed by others to press me, that, however reluctant, he could not refuse to do so. He then stated

* From South Street, February 2nd, 1835.

his reasons; and certainty of success was so far from being one of them that it is his letter which leads me to think that I shall not succeed. I have such reliance on the frankness and sincerity of Lord Melbourne, that I was sure there was nothing indirect or uncandid in his proceedings, and I thought that from respect to others I was bound to hear what was to be said, and I went to London. On doing so I was so much pressed that I had not the resolution to place my own wishes in opposition to the opinions of so many friends. The letters between John Russell and me were simply intended to place the grounds on which I ventured, after having so often refused, on what seemed to me to be the true footing. I think the whole proceedings questionable in prudence, although it looks as if Sutton had committed himself more than I had supposed. I take no part except writing to you. I have done and intend to do nothing in the matter. This is the course so far as I have been concerned, and I shall only add that I shall always feel regret that you had not written to me, for I now see how much good would have resulted from your having done so. I wish equally that your feelings had been differently stated from what they were in the single communication I received on the subject; but this I say to you in confidence, from my regard for you, and in justice to myself.*

Much it was thought would turn on the part taken by Lord Stanley, which would propably indicate the determination of Lord G. Bentinck, Mr. Evelyn Denison, Sir George Sinclair, Mr. Emerson Tennent, Sir R. Ferguson, and a good many more. Melbourne could not expect Spring Rice to show him letters which from old intimacy were likely to be still confidential, and which, as his sagacity divined, did contain in point of fact no end of comments upon men and things, made by the impulsive writer as unreservedly, and without concealment of any sort or kind, as if written for no

* From Abercromby to T. S. Rice, February 4th, 1835.

other eye than his own. But he did not hesitate to let Melbourne know that he meant to vote for the old Speaker, whose views were hardly more at variance with his than Abercromby's, and were less important, inasmuch as there was less chance of their being inflicted in practice on the country. The advocate for triennial parliaments, the hesitator about ballot, and the voluntary principle as applied to the National Church, was entitled on party grounds to no support from him. His correspondent's support rested on other grounds, and its refusal would be open to imputations of motives by which he, of all men he knew, was least likely to be influenced. "But it was idle to conceal that parties were not, and never could be again, what they were. Lord Grey had kept together in a wonderful manner some very discordant materials. His control gone, they followed their natural tendency to diverge, and never could be reunited. Of Melbourne's Cabinet he thought he was not unwarranted in saying that once dissolved, its reunion as a whole was equally impracticable."*

On the eve of the meeting of Parliament, Melbourne was overwhelmed with communications from the various sections of the party, some adjuring him to seek a union with Stanley and Graham, others to fraternise with Durham and the Radicals; some adjured him to throw office open to all creeds without distinction; others bid him beware of aggravating the "No Popery" cry. In answer to some suggestions from Spring Rice, he said, "With respect to the men and to the opinions to which you allude, I am as firmly resolved to keep clear of them as you are, and much rejoice to think that I shall have your support and countenance in so acting." †

I return you Buxton's letter with many thanks. As you say, the sooner the late business is forgotten the better, and I

* From Knowsley, February 4th, 1835.

† From Brocket Hall, February 11th, 1835.

only advert to it in order to express my hope that John Russell has explained to your satisfaction the circumstance of his letter, which when you mentioned it to me I could not account for. What may have passed between O'Connell and others, it is impossible for me to say. I can only assure you that any circumstance of the nature you mention, if it has taken place, has been studiously concealed from me, and not only is it so, but the precisely contrary representation has been made, viz., that he was prepared to vote for any one whom the party should propose. I believe he certainly designated Abercromby as the individual he should prefer. If any such report should obtain currency and belief it would at once be fatal to the result of the question. We cannot conceal from ourselves that the notion that we consulted with and were guided by O'Connell, did the late ministry in general and Duncannon in particular much injury. I feel myself personally to have been undeserving of the imputation, and am determined to continue so.*

After dinner at Hobhouse's on the 10th Poulett Thomson showed a list to J. Russell, Mulgrave, and R. Gordon (an intimate of Melbourne's) which gave 223 English and Welsh votes for Abercromby, and which with the Scotch Liberals and 50 Irish who might be counted on, would secure him a majority; and the same day, Stephenson, who was an active member of the party at the bar, and A. H. Lynch, who might have been supposed to know better, concurred in assuring Rolfe, who was known to be attached to Spring Rice, that O'Connell and most of his friends would rather vote for Sutton. It is curious to observe how close Thomson's calculation of English Whigs was to that of Lyndhurst, and how erring all surmises proved regarding the Irish members.† Melbourne, with Auckland, Abercromby, Hobhouse, and Lord John, spent the last days of January at Woburn,

* To T. S. Rice, Panshanger, February 5th, 1835.

† R. M. Rolfe to T. S. Rice, February 11th, 1835.

whither confidential reports of the canvass daily came, till at length they were assured that "three hundred would be brought to the post, and that the Tories were in a stew." Stanley had written to J. Russell to say that he would support Sutton, which had been expected. "Brougham returns from Nice on Sunday, with what temper or views I know not, for his letters of late have not alluded to politics otherwise than to convey his predominant feelings that of all men he is the one the most sinned against and the least sinning."* All sections finally agreed to support Abercromby. Great exertions were made on both sides, and when it became known that Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham would vote for Manners Sutton the friends of Government exulted beforehand in the triumph they felt to be assured. Lord Grey wrote from Howick "doubting the policy of taking the first battle on the Speakership, or on any question directly aimed at the existence of the administration."† And Melbourne himself, though surrounded by eager and sanguine partisans, did not profess to feel confident in the realisation of their prophecies. At length on the morning of the 19th of February, the temporary structure reared hastily on the site of the old House of Lords began to receive the members of the newly chosen House of Commons. It contained seats for not above three-fourths of those who might claim them, and when at two o'clock every place was occupied, the members who remained standing behind the chair and below the bar rendered the feeling of uncertainty more intense than ever as to the issue. The old Speaker, who was cheered as he took the first seat on the ministerial side below the gangway, looked as dignified and as authoritative as though he had been once more clothed with the insignia of office. Sir Robert Peel spoke briefly, and it was thought irresolutely; Stanley with a show of temper and desire to vindicate his divergence from his old friends provoked alternately ironical and applauding cheers. But it was not a theme for long debate, and the

* Lord Auckland, from Grove Road, February 7th, 1835.

† From Howick, February 6th, 1835.

question was at length put by the Clerk of the Table, Mr. Ley, who, as bound in courtesy to the former Speaker, declared him to have the majority. The galleries were cleared and the counting began. It was customary then for both sides to remain in their places and there to be reckoned by the tellers, who stood between them with their wands of office. The ministerialists were declared to be 306, and already those about him congratulated Sutton on having manifestly won. Then came the reckoning for his opponent. Except the Opposition Whips, few felt sure that so great a number could be beaten, but when 300 had been told, and some difficulty was found in seeing accurately into the last corner of the crowded gangway on the left, the suspense was for the moment breathless. "Three hundred and five," and then there was a slight pause; "three hundred and six," a briefer pause; and then "three hundred and seven" called forth such a cheer as wholly drowned the rest of the announcements, which went on until the final numbers were declared to be for Abercromby, "three hundred and sixteen." The defeat of Government was the more significant, because Stanley and his friends were counted in the minority, while Lord Dudley Stuart, Sir Francis Burdett, Mr. Angerstein, and other Whigs stayed away. In the brief debate on the merits of the rival candidates, Lord John Russell was by general consent invested with the leadership of the Liberal party in the Commons, a position which he retained with great distinction and influence for the next twenty years.

The studious and thoughtful character of his mind instinctively led him to seek influence and fame as a legislator; and no handwriting is so traceable as his in the laws of our time. Melbourne was equally fitted by mother-wit, knowledge of the world, and discrimination of character to be a successful administrator. The capacities of the one supplemented well the capabilities of the other; and though it would perhaps have been impossible to find two eminent men with less in common by nature, habits, or tastes, they fitted admirably together when brought into intimate

relations; and daily learned to appreciate more highly each other's ability and worth.

In the intervals of political excitement and ambition, the minister in expectancy found time for gossip with Mrs. Norton and the Miss Berrys, Lavalette, Bruce, and Haydon. Calling one morning, the painter found him lounging over the *Edinburgh Review;* he began instantly, "'Why, here are a set of fellows who want public money for scientific purposes, as well as you for painting; they are a set of ragamuffins!' 'That's the way,' said I; 'nobody has any right to public money but those who are brought up to politics. Are not painting and science as much matter of public benefit as political jobbing? You never look upon us as equals; but any scamp who trades in politics is looked on as a companion for my lord.' 'That is not true,' said he. 'I say it is,' said I; and then he roared with laughter and rubbed his hands. He had been to Woburn, where he had met Chantrey and Landseer; I could not get him to touch on politics. 'Lord Melbourne, will you make me a promise?' 'What is that?' 'Pass your word to get a vote of money for Art, if you are Premier again.' Not a word. No old politician ever speaks on politics so as to give you a notion of what is going on. After chatting a good while about everything, I bid him good-bye."

On the 26th of February it appears that the artist wrote to his distinguished friend offering him a study of himself for ten guineas, but received no reply.

On the 1st of March he called on Melbourne, and found him reading the Acts with a quarto Greek Testament that belonged to Samuel Johnson, given him by Lady Spencer. "'Is not the world, Lord Melbourne, an evidence of perpetual struggle to remedy a defect?' 'Certainly,' he mused out. 'If, as Milton says, we were sufficient to have stood, why did we fall?' Lord Melbourne rose bolt up, and replied, 'Ah, that's touching on all our apprehensions.' We then swerved to Art. He advised us not to petition before Ewart's motion. I told him that all the ministers began

with enthusiasm and ended with doubt, because they first saw the propriety of my propositions, and then asked advice of the Academy, who, perfectly contented with their monopoly and emolument, denied the necessity of State support."

While every step in the progress of conciliation between English Whigs and Irish Catholics was gravely denounced by the orators and the organs of Government, the way was strewn with thorns not the less sharp and deterrent because they could not with gravity be complained of and nobody knew whence they came. In a laughable sketch by H. B. entitled "Coalition,"* a sable wolf, with visage betraying an unmistakable likeness to the great Agitator, was engaged in *pourparler* with the foremost of the fleecy flock, whose features were those of their late shepherd. "Let us," exclaimed the former, "merge all our trifling differences and make a common war upon these tyrannical watch-dogs." The ministers, dimly seen in the distance, the shifting incidents of the time, and the remarkable physiognomies of some of the principal actors in the scene afforded tempting subjects for the graphic pencil of the humourist; and with marvellous facility he embodied in ever-varying forms of hybrid portraiture the current joke of the day. For sufficient reasons he chose to preserve the anonym of initials not his own. Experience as an animal-painter enabled him to give originality of outline to his grotesque groups; and though he did not always use this fanciful element of fun, his happiest efforts were certainly those in which the characteristic expressions of biped and quadruped were mischievously mingled. "Neither an Opossum nor a Kangaroo, but something of both," delineated O'Connell benignantly nursing three small Whigs, whose heads are peeping out of his pouch. The success of these cartoons stimulated the fertility of the artist, and every other week there appeared a new one. If the hitting was often hard, it was always fair, each party and each celebrity coming in for a turn.

* H. B., January 18th, 1835.

It would be idle to claim for Melbourne the strength of will, the originality of resource, the knowledge of detail, or the unfailing eloquence which in varying degrees characterised most of his predecessors and successors in the civil primacy. But he had a quality which they lacked, and which, at the juncture in question, tended in no small degree to bring about the unanimity wherewith it was agreed to have him a second time for chief of the party. He had no enmities and no enemies. Rancour was foreign to his nature; and lasting resentment, no matter what the provocation, had not a hiding-place in his open heart. He could be angry, indignant, and unsparing at the time; he gave back readily blow for blow; and it must be owned that when stirred to wrath by unjust imputation, or unworthy conduct, his epithets were sometimes rough, and not unfrequently profane. On such occasions he would flush with rage, and swear he never would forgive the offender; but he did forgive him the next morning all the same,—not for expediency or upon philosophical principle, but simply because he could not help it. He wondered in truth at the spleen and spite with which he saw men swayed continually. Talking to Auckland one day about the condition of parties, he said, "The great fault of the present time is that men hate each other so damnably; for my part I love them all."* His friend shared in a great degree this feeling, and observed that "if something of his amiable spirit could be caught by others and grafted on Lord Wellesley's counsel *to demolish these people*, matters would not be so difficult."

Before Parliament met Lord Spencer wrote:—

I think you must have an amendment in the Commons. It must be strong enough to express the opinion of the House on the change of administration, but ought it not to be a little stronger?†

* From Lord Auckland, February 11th, 1835.

† Lord Spencer to T. S. Rice, Wiseton, February 4th, 1835.

An amendment to the address, expressive of regret that the progress of salutary reforms had been interrupted and endangered by the dissolution of the late Parliament, was moved by Melbourne in a temperate speech, the principal interest of which lay in his authoritative account of his dismissal in October by the King. By implication a rebuke, if not a censure, was pronounced on ministers, who, by accepting office and advising an appeal to the country, had acted contrary to the interest and desire of the nation. The Duke of Wellington, mistaking the doctrine laid down by Melbourne, denied that he was in any way responsible for the displacement of the late Cabinet, which he declared had been a spontaneous act of his Majesty, wholly unsuggested and unexpected by him or by any of his colleagues. Brougham, who had assisted in preparing the amendment, contended that the constitutional doctrine of ministerial responsibility would be practically worthless if neither the outgoing or incoming ministers were to be held accountable when a change of parties occurred. By accepting portfolios the new men became accessories after the fact in the eyes of Parliament, which must always have somebody or some set of men to make answerable for every high act of state. This was the very essence of constitutional government, the denial of which would subvert every security for popular freedom and for the conservation of limited monarchy. It was characteristic of the man that Melbourne thought it unnecessary to enforce what, in his clear and cultivated judgment, seemed to be an elementary truth. He evidently did not anticipate the possibility of its being questioned, and thus it devolved on the ex-Chancellor to remind the peers of their rights and duties in a matter so momentous. In the Commons, when the same amendment was moved, Sir Robert Peel at once accepted fully the responsibility he had incurred by taking office, and endeavoured to justify the change he had manifestly not advised or foreseen, as he was travelling in Italy when it took place. He had counselled a dissolution because he could not govern with the late

Parliament, and because he thought the country would elect another predominantly of his own opinions. The choice of Abercromby had already shaken this belief, and the majority in favour of the amendment to the address tended still further to dissipate it. In the Upper House it was, indeed, rejected without a division; but the impression made by the discussion was highly favourable to the ex-Premier.

Stanley tried hard to collect around him from both sides a moderate party, and strove to prove his own superiority as a leader by alternately quizzing and jeering the "Top-boot Tories" who held fast by too much, and the "Out and out Radicals who would leave nothing alone." But Conservatives who sighed in private at the unyielding temper and the *sic volo, sic jubeo* of the Field-Marshal Minister, winced when they heard him sneered at in public; and squeamish Whigs, who went about scolding their Whips for reckoning them with Repealers, asked one another in suspicious whispers what the would-be leader of a third party could mean by voting twice in the same week with the Government. On the Speakership he and his friends had reduced the majority to ten, and on the Address to seven. Malcontent murmurs arose in the Seceders' camp; and by way of trimming the balance of neutrality it was decided to support Sheil's motion of censure on the nomination of Lord Londonderry as Ambassador to Russia. The result was a defeat of Ministers. Upon the whole the numbers in Great Britain were nearly balanced, while the working majority of thirty was furnished by Ireland. The future policy of the Liberal party was marked with this initial, and every day quickened the popular conviction that, without an acknowledgment of the principle of equality in legislation for all parts of the United Kingdom, the Whigs could not hope for a return to power.

On the first Sunday in March the Duke of Sussex entertained all the members of the dismissed Cabinet (except Brougham), and other prominent members of the party; and the new leader of the Liberals in the Commons was entertained

at a public dinner by 260 of his supporters. A fusion of all shades of opposition finally took place at a meeting held a fortnight later at Lichfield House, where it was resolved to merge past differences for the sake of securing an administration founded on the general principles in which all could consistently agree. No authorized report of the conference appeared in print; but an expression used by Sheil that between sections hitherto discordant a "compact alliance had been formed," was made the text of much invective and reproach; and of reiterated imputation that beneath the roof of the late Master of the Buckhounds *a compact* had been made with the chief of the Catholic party by Melbourne. How he dealt with the assertion we shall presently see.

On the eve of Lord J. Russell's motion to appropriate the surplus funds of the Established Church in Ireland to general purposes of education, the Stanleyites, to the number of twenty-nine, met at the "King's Head," Palace Yard, and there agreed to disagree, in accordance with the admonitions and remonstrances of their varied constituencies. Twelve found it necessary to vote with the Opposition; two or three thought they had better stay away; and the rest would vote with Peel. The consequences of this disunion soon appeared. Stanley, in debate, prefigured in terms of caustic humour the impending restoration of the Melbourne Cabinet; and Graham solemnly forewarned them that the principle of expropriating Church revenues never could be carried into effect. But the House, indifferent alike to persiflage and prophecy, by 321 to 289, voted that the Anglican Establishment in Irelan was excessive, and that its surplus revenues ought to be applied to the purpose of general education. On bringing up the report of the resolution on the 6th of April, the majority was 25, and on the final vote the following day, in a House of 543, Sir Robert Peel was defeated by 27. He had fully redeemed his promise to the electors of Tamworth, to fight it out as long as honour or propriety would admit; and nothing more remained for him but to resign.

CHAPTER IV.

FORMING A GOVERNMENT.

Refusal to attempt Coalition—Brougham and O'Connell left out—Jealousy of Palmerston—Irish law officers—Thomas Drummond.

On Wednesday, the 8th of April, the Conservative Premier told the King that the Government was at an end. No step was taken until the following morning, when Earl Grey was summoned, less with the expectation that he could be prevailed upon to resume office, than that he would patriotically advise as to who should be sent for. He named Lansdowne and Melbourne, and was desired to attend with them next day.

In the audience of Friday William IV. betrayed little of the vexation and fear to which he was a prey. He discussed with dignity and calmness the position of affairs, asking counsel of each in turn, weighing carefully the requirements of the time, and intimating his wish that means might be found for bringing about an administrative union of the moderate men of both parties. Lansdowne and Melbourne stated without reserve that under the circumstances such a coalition was impossible; and referred to the resolutions lately carried in the House of Commons regarding the Irish Church, as forming in themselves an insuperable obstacle to ministerial fusion. The King did not seem convinced, and said he would consider further what was to be done, and they left the Palace without any definite intimation of his intentions. On Saturday, the 11th of April,

Melbourne was summoned alone and desired to undertake the formation of a Government. He accepted the task with due acknowledgments, but conditionally on being able to secure the co-operation of those without whom it would be beyond his power. His first step on quitting the Palace was to seek Lord Grey, with a view of persuading him if possible to assume once more the head of affairs. He found him despondent, and tried to rally his old courage;—obdurate, from the recollection of having been, as he thought, ill used; and he tried to mollify his resentment. He failed; but on leaving him, sought to combine influences which might prove more potent than his own. At the close of a day spent in conference with the leading members of the party, he confessed to Lansdowne that he was unable to see his way:—

I have seen Grey again, and also John Russell. The latter agrees with the opinion which you gave me this morning, but is by no means sanguine. Grey sees great difficulties, and I must own that the more I contemplate the question the greater those difficulties appear to me, both in general and in detail. I have seen Rice this evening, and find him also opposed to the undertaking. Unless we can carry him along with us it is idle to think of it. I have desired him to call here to-morrow morning, and will bring him to you that we may again talk over the matter. I have not written to the King as yet to name any hour for waiting upon him. John Russell's matrimonial engagement is very unlucky.*

Later in the evening he received the following letter from his Majesty, which he at once communicated to Lansdowne and Grey.†

The King returns approved to the Viscount Melbourne the letter he has this instant received at Gloucester House

* From South Street, April 11th, 1835.

† From South Street, April 12th, 1835.

signed by five of the Cabinet ministers who formed the administration under Lord Grey.

The King requests the Viscount to make known to Lord Grey his Majesty's anxious wish to see the Earl at the head of the Government, and to recall to the recollection of Lord Grey the serious regret of his Majesty at being deprived of the able services of the Earl, and consequently the satisfaction the King must feel at the return of the Earl to the head of his Majesty's confidential servants.

The King trusts to see Lord Grey to-morrow, to repeat these sentiments to his Lordship, and to arrange the Earl's acceptance of First Lordship of the Treasury.

(Signed) Wm. R.

Gloucester House, April 11th, 1835.

The veteran statesman would not swerve from his resolve, and bade Melbourne try if he could succeed. Spring Rice objected, as he said, to embarking in an enterprise so difficult, if they must be dependent on the caprice of the Ultras. He foresaw, more clearly than many of his friends, elate with triumph at the recent divisions, and unaccustomed to the drawbacks and perplexities of official life, how difficult it would be to repel the taunts of a powerful and angry Opposition on subjects especially connected with Ireland, without alienating a section of her representatives whose votes on a question of confidence they could not spare; and if not repelled effectively and firmly, who could tell how many sensitive or unsatisfied Whigs would be missing when most wanted? But in a long conference on the 12th at Lansdowne House, his misgivings were overborne by the arguments of his former chief in office, from whom throughout a long political life, though he sometimes differed, he never parted. The Marquis did not hesitate to say, "Of all the leading members of the House of Commons with whom I have acted, or it is probable I shall ever act in public life, you are the one in whom I should feel the greatest confidence at this critical period, both with respect to the measures which should be

supported and those which should be resisted."* Auckland's reappointment as First Lord of the Admiralty increased his own satisfaction in being again Lord President.

The new Government had likewise the aid in council and debate of the favourite nephew and pupil of Fox; the fearless and eloquent friend of every rightful cause; and the most cosmopolitan host of genius, learning, and wit, in Europe. He had been Privy Seal in the administration of All the Talents, and he was now named Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Between him and the Premier there had always existed the most entire confidence and unison, though in temperament there could not be a more subtle contrast. Both were upright, brave, and consistent advocates of what they believed to be true; and both undaunted and outspoken censors of what they held to be false. Lord Grey was by nature cold, haughty, and unsympathetic; without a gleam of humour or a flash of imagination; morbidly sensitive to neglect, or any supposed infringement of his dignity; and embittered by long exclusion from power. Lord Holland had likewise been shut out with the rest of his party; but with him it was no matter of grievance, far less of resentment. His joyous spirit revelled all the while in the liberty of questioning and quizzing, of criticism and caricature; and the only revenge he ever thought of taking was that of earnest denunciation of bad measures or pitiless ridicule of the bad logic used in support of them. Around him at his matchless house near town were gathered all the risen and the rising talent in politics and letters. And there, with true republican absence of conventionality, was discussed every novelty and difficulty in opinion. Host and hostess had their favourites; none were more zealous partisans; but neither foreign birth or alienation in political sentiment excluded an able man or a witty woman from the circle, who had once been appreciated there. The predominant hue was always Whig, and something more; but Lyndhurst was welcome after he had ceased

* Letter, January 16th, 1835.

to be Jacobin, and Scarlett after he had ceased to be a Whig, and the Lievens, Talleyrand and Guizot seemed as much at home at Holland House as Czartoryski or Louis Napoleon. There was indeed, as there must always be in a society so varied, an inner circle of intimates and *habitués*, like Mackintosh, Sydney Smith, Rogers, and Tom Moore, subject to the capricious rule of Lady Holland, whose likings and dislikes were often unaccountable and were always made known without reserve. It was the freest and merriest, the brightest and the most enjoyable centre of intellectual intercourse English life has ever known. Its value to the Liberal party was wholly inestimable. Lord Grey was one of the stars of this social firmament, observed by all when he appeared at intervals, and very conscious, in his melancholy way, of admiration. He was not, however, a man of pleasantry or gossip; he relished keenly repartee or scarcasm, but he could not if he would, and he would not if he could have indulged, like the master of the house, in mimicry, or like the Canon of St. Paul's, in jokes worthy of Tristram Shandy. Badinage was not in his line, and no one would have ever thought of bantering him. It was otherwise with Melbourne, who was ever welcome with or without invitation, and whose quaint and sometimes brusque originality was exactly what was truest to the genius of the place and was there most thoroughly loved. With Allen he could talk of books; with Mackintosh of canonists and historians; with Lady Holland of the foibles of pretty women and the oddities of men of mark; with Macaulay of travel, poetry, and speculation, and all the rest beside. Never taking the trouble to shine, he bore his part gaily or gravely as it might be in the general talk; never quarrelling with my Lady when whimsical or disposed to domineer, and choosing rather to laugh her out of her petulance than yield her the triumph of being insolent with impunity. Lord Lansdowne was as ready to encourage raillery and to take a joke without huff; but he had not the same skill of fence or promptitude of repartee. It has been said, however, and doubtless with truth, that towards

Melbourne there was habitually a certain cautiousness in making free by those who knew the sensitiveness of the man, and how he chafed and writhed in silence when the quick was touched, although too manly to betray a motion to unfamiliar eyes. Had he not felt safe at Holland House he would not have gone there as often as he did: being at his ease, the relief and the refreshment of its society was, during his official life, the best of privileges and pleasures.

Lord John Russell agreed to be Home Secretary, Charles Grant, Colonial, and Lord Howick was named Secretary at War; and late in the afternoon of Monday the 13th, Melbourne acquainted his Majesty that he had made some progress in his arduous undertaking, and that he entertained reasonable confidence of being able to complete it.

Hobhouse became President of the Board of Control. Adverse critics asked, what did he know about India; how we had come by it; or how it ought to be governed? It could only be said on his behalf, that he was not more ignorant of Oriental affairs than his predecessors for half a century had been, who, with the single exception of Sir Gilbert Elliot, had to learn the alphabet of the administrative policy of conquest. Some of them, like Castlereagh and Canning, had brought to the discharge of their duties the rare fitness for exalted rule, which men call statesmanship; most of the others possessed no such qualities by nature, and never acquired them. The member for Nottingham had written a volume of travels and two clever pamphlets; had made several caustic speeches; had fought some expensive elections, and was ready to fight as many more when needed. He was very rich, kept an excellent house, was fond of humour, if not a wit, and being early pledged to household suffrage and the ballot, without being suspected of impracticable zeal for these or any other measures, he was in the position of an elegible Radical, whose admission, if it did not satisfy the advanced section, would at least help to stifle the reproach of exclusiveness. He felt himself, indeed, in the condition of a hostage, rather than a thoroughly

trusted comrade; for, having regard to his past professions, he knew that he should be nearly alone. It was in this view he told the Premier that he thought his new Cabinet was not so liberal as his former administration; alluding to the absence of Lord Spencer, Ellice, and Abercromby, all of whom were balloteers. Melbourne replied, that some people told him it was too Jacobinical. Had he sent Lord Durham to Ireland, or made O'Connell Attorney-General, there would have been more colour in the taunt. But as it stood, the Government was in its composition less committed to further measures of organic change than that of the preceding year. In departmental efficiency it was certainly not less strong; but with all his personal good qualities, Hobhouse added little to its strength.

The Board of Control had been invented by Pitt to check, as he said, the illiberal and exacting tendencies of a trading company to abuse the unprecedented powers they required for territorial dominion. It was to maintain the moral and political influence of England in the East, by seeing that justice was done to the natives subject to our sway, and faith kept with the independent princes, encroachment on whose territories we did not desire. It was to be a counterweight to avaricious enterprise, a guarantee against insidious or open aggression; and had its president always been a man of generous and enlightened sentiments, and of resolute and active will, the mechanism of counterpoise might have answered its design; but the design was speedily forgotten in the exigencies of party and the perplexities of increasing debt. The patronage of India became too easily a means of satisfying importunate friends and gratifying ambitious expectants. In the main a good understanding, as it was pleasantly called, was established between Leadenhall Street and Cannon Row; and except on rare occasions, the very theory of check and balance in what was termed the double Government was put out of view. Parliament had recently interfered to break down the old chart of monopoly, and to throw open the trade of the East; and

great expectations were held forth that a policy truly imperial in its scope and beneficent in its aim was about to be inaugurated. But the great opportunity was thrown away.

Lord Wellesley had settled in his own mind that he was to be replaced on the Viceregal throne, and was surprised and mortified at being offered instead the Gold Key of Lord Chamberlain. He accepted it, was sworn in, and held it for a few weeks; when, owing to something which has never been fully explained, he suddenly gave it up, and never after was invited to take office.

One of the greatest difficulties was how to deal with Brougham, whose reappointment as Chancellor was impossible after all the pranks that he had played. For some time Melbourne had made up his mind not to sit in the same Cabinet again with him, and previous to accepting office, he communicated frankly the nature of his objections to his principal colleagues, by whom they were fully shared. Lord Russell testifies, from personal knowledge of all the circumstances, that these involved no charges of treachery, political or social; but his inveterate propensity to meddle in the business of departments not his own, his utter want of reticence where others had an indefeasible claim upon his silence, and his insatiable desire to engross the praise of every act to which he was in any degree a party, rendered him incurably unreliable as a confidant. Macaulay may have been prejudiced against him by early slights; and no man was more likely to have thus affronted a youthful candidate for party favour who disdained to offer incense to his exacting vanity; but this will hardly account for the language of antipathy and contempt in which we find him speaking of Brougham in after-years. Instability of purpose, chameleon-like changefulness of talk, forgetfulness of what he had vehemently urged but yesterday, exaggeration in every tone, whether of praise or blame, and recklessness in pursuit of every project, whether great or small, flattery to excess where it was not desired, and vituperation beyond bounds where it was not deserved,

intrusiveness without regard to delicacy or decorum, and usurpation to the vulgar eye of a supremacy in council which he never ventured to arrogate there,—these and many other faults and foibles were lamented and forgiven by Melbourne, but only for a reason which in itself outweighed them all, and rendered it impossible for him even to consider the question of recommending him again to be keeper of the conscience of the King. They had long been intimate; they had had no quarrel; their orbits did not intersect each other. Melbourne appreciated intensely the vigour, aptitude, indefatigability, rhetorical power, and genuine though frequently grotesque humour of the man. He knew that he might often feel the want of his aid in the struggle that was to come; and what a fire-ship he would prove were he cut adrift. Melbourne did not like the prospect; but it might be worse. Better let him rove at sea, than prowl about in harbour. But, convinced that he was not always accountable for his words and actions, that unconsciousness rather than unconscientiousness was the cause of his chief errors, he felt that it would be unpardonable to place him at the head of the judicature of the realm, and in direct contact with the sovereign by whom he was feared and loathed. Speaking of the humiliated and frightened monarch with a consideration that was his wont, he said to an old friend, "Even if all the rest agreed to let in Brougham, I could not bring myself to force him on the King." But of "all the rest" who were immediately concerned or consulted, there was scarcely one who thought he should be recalled. Even Lord Spencer so clearly "saw his glaring defects, and the mischief they were calculated to do himself and every one with whom he was acting, that though he lamented, he by no means censured his being thrown overboard."* Intrigue of every kind was his delight; not for mischief or for gain, but often, as he persuaded himself, for the accomplishment of public benefit; often,

* From Earl Spencer to T. S. Rice, April 19th, 1835.

as he undoubtedly intended, for the advancing of neglected worth and talent which he undertook to patronise, but often for the perverse pleasure of overreaching and outwitting those whom he was bound loyally to consult and aid. In Melbourne's words, "if left out he would indeed be dangerous; but if taken in he would simply be destructive. We may have little chance of being able to go on without him, but to go on with him would be impossible." Terms or conditions that would bind such a Proteus were not within the inventive brain of man; for his opinions varied with the wind, and his memory of promises and professions ebbed and flowed by laws of attraction unknown to the rest of this sublunary world. What rendered the embarrassment greater was the palpable fact that up to the last moment he had not the least suspicion of being thought incompatible or crazy: on the contrary, he spoke and acted in undoubting confidence that he was about to resume his seat on the Woolsack; and he was already ruminating the topics of a re-inaugural address to the bar. No one ventured before the necessity arose to undertake the task of undeceiving him. But at length the hour had arrived, and he must now be told that he was not again to be Chancellor. What was to be done; should the painful communication be made to him in writing, or by the lips of some judicious friend who might bear unmoved the first outbreak of astonishment and wrath? Melbourne with characteristic pluck resolved to be the bearer of his own message, and to take upon his own head the responsibility of the unexpected blow. Late in the evening he called at Berkeley Square, and in an interview which lasted more than two hours, sought to mitigate the pain he was obliged to inflict, and to soothe the irritation which he too well knew was likely to prove dangerous. When he said he was not in a position to offer the Great Seal to anybody, Brougham at a glance divined what was coming, and said that had he come to offer it to him he would not have accepted it. Equally adroit, Melbourne rejoined that he was

not at all surprised to hear him say so. It was for a time a contest of finesse, in which the ex-Chancellor strove to hide his mortification in profuse compassion for the crippled and helpless condition in which his friend would find himself at the head of a feeble ministry; while the new Premier appealed to the magnanimity of his ostracised colleague to maintain a dignified and generous attitude, which would enable him to effect much public good. Brougham was hard to be convinced that some one else was not about to have the Great Seal; but when assured that it was in contemplation to put it in commission for some time, he grew more tractable, and began to think that after all his interest was to be sacrificed only for a season to appease the ill-humour of the Court. Before the end of the interview he was half disposed to forgive Melbourne for sake of the enjoyment of patronising and protecting him, even as Pitt befriended Addington. So readily did this vanity strike root and grow, that during the rest of the session he was irrepressible in assiduous care of what he chose to call a ministry of transition. Had the chancellorship been at once filled up by the appointment of either Pepys, Bickersteth, or Campbell, this curious phase would never have occurred. Brougham would have naturally ascribed his exclusion wholly to the King; and in the state of public feeling then existing, had he flung himself boldly into the stream, there is no saying how far his marvellous powers as a demagogue might have changed the course of events. But he knew the weakness of William IV.'s character, and imagined that by-and-by his grudge would wear away. The King's health, moreover, was impaired, and in a new reign who could be Chancellor but the man whom the people delighted to honour? With his peerage, his pension of five thousand a year, and his time at his own disposal for speech-making, pamphleteering, article-writing and private talk, what might he not effect? He would find out by degrees who had been undermining him, and he would smite them hip and thigh. Meanwhile he would hold the fate of

Government in the hollow of his hand, and play a greater part than ever. At heart Melbourne did not relish the prospect before him. It is not clear that he had altogether relinquished the hope of being able after a time to offer the ex-Chancellor some other office; but he was too wary to commit himself by any promise to one so totally irretentive of confidence: and, in truth, any suggestion of the kind made in the first moments of disappointment would have tended only to exacerbate the wound. The vagueness in which the future was left, led to the conclusion in the mind of Brougham that he might render himself either so useful or so formidable that he must yet be restored.

Lord Morpeth, whose recent triumph in the West Riding was due in no small degree to his popularity with the middle classes, and who by affinity represented the most influential Whig connection, was named Secretary for Ireland. To appease the natural curiosity and solicitude with which the course of events was awaited there, Holland wrote in confidence to Lord Cloncurry, who was to communicate to the Duke of Leinster and other friends that "after a joint earnest but fruitless endeavour of his late colleagues and the King to prevail on Lord Grey to resume office, Lord Melbourne was authorized to form a ministry. With one painful exception, occasioned in a great measure by public feeling, just or unjust, he would not have to encounter more difficulties and annoyances than usually attend the appointment of some, and the disappointment of others in such an operation."*

When Lord Grey refused to return to the Treasury, it was the hope of the King and of Melbourne that he might consent, like Lord Chatham, to take the Privy Seal with a view to guiding the conduct of foreign affairs. Holland especially tried to persuade him, partly from old friendship and partly from his tendency to differ with Palmerston, whose return to his former office he viewed with anything but satisfaction. Up to the last it was regarded as doubtful what

* April 14th, 1835.

the ex-Premier's decision would be. Palmerston well knew the favourable influence Grey's adhesion would have on the prospects of the Government; but he naturally expected to be replaced in the Foreign Office; and when asked if there was nothing else he would accept, he declined. He had not anticipated having any competitor for a post he had filled with conspicuous ability and success, though not without creating many enemies. He had offended Talleyrand and other members of the diplomatic corps past forgiveness. They had frequently complained of his demeanour towards them. He sometimes kept them waiting long after the hour appointed for assembling in conference on the Belgian Question; and he took small pains to conceal at times how little store he set on their suggestions or arguments. Lansdowne and Holland were for the most part the medium through which expressions of their ill-humour were conveyed, and there are reasons for believing that an attempt was made in the reconstruction of the Cabinet to induce Palmerston to accept another office. It became, in fact, a cause of some difficulty, and for a day or two of doubt, whether another appointment should not be made. But his alienation, added to all the defections of the preceding year, was not a danger to be trifled with. Durham had long set his heart upon the Secretaryship of State, and one of his discontents with his father-in-law was that he had not in this respect promoted his views. He now urged Lord Grey to recommend his appointment, and thought an English peerage and an Irish Marquisate with some office of the first rank might induce Palmerston to give way. Melbourne had no wish, however, to intrust Durham with the management of Foreign Affairs. He had had ample experience of the intractability of his temper during the period of the Reform Bill. Any embassy he liked he should have and welcome, but not a department in which he had had no experience and would not submit to be controlled. He was perhaps the last man to whom Palmerston would give way in the office he had occupied, for four years, and the idea of any one being preferred to him

there filled him with resentment. He might, if he would, have had the Viceroyalty of Ireland, where he possessed landed property; or that of India, with whose affairs as connected with those of Russia, Persia, and the Levant he was officially familiar. But he could not brook what he regarded as the indignity of being superseded in the department with which he had identified his name, and to be banished from the scene and centre of power, by the party for whom he had quitted the ranks of the Tories,—ranks which would receive him with acclamation were he to return to them. The secession of Stanley and his friends, and the disposition already manifested by several others to go over would render this all the easier. In point of fact, up to this period Palmerston was not a member of Brooks's, and was hardly recognised as a Whig. He had never quarrelled with the Duke or Peel, and with Stanley he always contrived to get on very well. Many years after, when new schemes of coalition were on the carpet, and when Lord Derby had become the acknowledged chief of the Conservative party, he used the expression, "After all Stanley has always been very liberal:"* and at heart there was not much difference of sentiment between them, though their paths diverged, and henceforth they sat on opposite sides. It cannot be denied that Melbourne would have been glad if Lord Grey could have been prevailed on to take, or virtually to guide as formerly the Foreign Department. But on his refusal he made up his mind to give it back to his old friend. The Earl announced that he had finally relinquished official life; but he was gratified at his son being named Secretary at War, with a seat in the Cabinet, while his nephew was named Under-Secretary of the Colonies, one son-in-law appointed Secretary to the Admiralty, and another ambassador to St. Petersburg. Besides his proxy or his vote he promised to exercise his influence in support of the Government, and on one or two occasions he defended their measures in debate. But the

* In conversation with the Author.

loss of individual importance was not consoled by the exceptional preference shown to his connexions. He chafed and fretted at what he deemed neglect, and complained that he saw daily many persons of note and fashion pass his door who but yesterday had been impatient if not admitted.

Failing to obtain the Foreign Office, which was the object of his ambition, Durham consented to go as ambassador to St. Petersburg. Palmerston sagaciously resolved to avoid the possibility of a second refusal by the Czar; and confidentially inquired whether the Radical earl would be acceptable; and on receiving an intimation that no difficulty would be made, his appointment was submitted for approval to the King. His Majesty assented, but on being told soon afterwards of preliminary inquiries having been made regarding the disposition of the Autocrat, he waxed exceeding wrath, and sharply complained to Melbourne that he had been slighted by his Foreign Secretary. "Here," he wrote, "is the devil to pay about this appointment of Durham. The King has taken great offence at the Emperor of Russia's consent having been obtained before Durham was named to him. I send you the correspondence which has passed. There is another long explanatory letter of Palmerston's, which went also to him this morning. His censure of Palmerston is so violent that I know not how I can acquiesce under it. I have not been well, but I will come to the House of Lords."*

On Monday the 13th there was some discussion about the basis of the proposed Cabinet. Differences existed as to the proportion in which diverging sections could be combined in it, and with regard to appointments in the household, and to the reserved power of creating peers. The King conceded what was asked, and matters seemed going on smoothly, and up to Tuesday night there appeared no reason to anticipate any insuperable difficulty. Meanwhile, however, unwarier hands than Melbourne's were at work, busily employed in building adjuncts to the edifice which were considered out of

* To Lord Lansdowne, June 30th, 1835.

keeping with the original design. Mulgrave, who had won a certain reputation as Govenor of Jamaica, was appointed Viceroy of Ireland. No proposal had been made for the inclusion of O'Connell or any of his personal friends. Whatever the intentions of the Premier at the moment may have been, he understood too well the antipathy felt by Lord Grey and the aversion entertained by his Majesty, to mention the great Agitator's name. Without the support of the Irish popular party, it was obvious that no Liberal ministry could stand. But unless it were constituted without resort to a coalition, it was equally obvious to him that it could never begin to exist. If Ireland was to be tranquillised, the chief spokesman of discontent must be conciliated; and it was not in human nature to expect that one who had proved himself to be indispensable, and whose eloquence, ability and energy friends and foes agreed in acknowledging as transcendent, should acquiesce in public ostracism. If a Government could be formed upon the principle of doing equal justice to men of all opinions and beliefs, Catholics would be admitted gradually to office; and if he was without a rival amongst them in political capacity he could not be long excluded. But the violence of his language on many occasions, and the menaces he had openly used regarding the stability of the Union, had so recently exasperated, not merely Court and Parliament, but the great body of the educated community, that it would have been impossible to obtain a fair hearing for the new policy if O'Connell as one of its advocates should take his seat on the Treasury Bench. That he himself was not conscious of his own incompatibility, and that he expected the offer of high administrative office to be made to him, is beyond all doubt. That Melbourne's absolute reserve and silence was likely to be misunderstood by him is equally clear: but that under the circumstances it was wise hardly admits of question. We only know that others, less discerning and considerate, thought fit to interpose, and by doing so well-nigh overset all that his care and circumspection had been bringing to completion.

Rumours quickly reached the Palace that the man whom the King had been advised to denounce from the throne as an incendiary was about to be proposed to him as Attorney-General for Ireland. His fear and anger knew no bounds: "Lord Grey would never have done this; and would never sanction it. Melbourne was too flexible, too easy; but he would put in writing without delay the terms on which alone he would appoint the new Ministers." On Wednesday morning came a letter of six pages about O'Connell and Hume, and above all about the appropriation of Church revenues, to which his Majesty protested he would not consent. Melbourne wrote a short and very decisive answer, and subsequently went to St. James's. He told his Majesty that he would not submit to have any one excluded, but that there was no intention of employing either Hume or O'Connell. He said that it was necessary to do one of three things: 1st, to act on the resolutions of the House of Commons with a new Cabinet; 2nd, to oppose the resolutions with the old Cabinet, or a similar Cabinet and with the present Parliament; 3rd, to dissolve the Parliament. The King said it would be madness to dissolve Parliament now, and he seemed satisfied with Melbourne's explanation. But shortly after he left the palace came another letter from his Majesty, urging the propriety of quieting his scruples as to the violation of the Coronation Oath, in consenting to the application of Church property to secular purposes, and proposing that the fifteen judges should be consulted thereupon. In consequence of this suggestion it was agreed that the House of Commons should be further adjourned to Saturday. Melbourne strongly objected to consulting the judges, and the King gave up that proposal, but recommended that he should ask the opinion of Lyndhurst. Melbourne said that he would not advise such a step, but if his Majesty chose to take it he could. Accordingly the King wrote to Lyndhurst, and Melbourne saw the letter.* The ex-Chancellor was too cautious a man to commit himself to any opinion of

* 'Lord Broughton's Recollections,' vol. iii. pp. 114–116.

the sort after the experience he had had of colleagues in council; and with due apologies he positively declined to perform the function of keeping the royal conscience when no longer Keeper of the Seal.

Upon a recent occasion it appears that expressions had publicly fallen from O'Connell which led to the inference that he would not be unwilling to take office under the newly formed Liberal Administration, "to try how far England could legislate for Ireland in a manner that would content the people." The statement naturally attracted comment, and he soon afterwards declared that he had no such view or intention. He had, in fact, popularity and income to risk, if not to sacrifice, which no one else had at the time, by the acceptance of place. His annual tribute in 1834 had amounted to £13,000; and at the general election of 1835 three of his sons and three other near relatives were returned, avowedly in compliment to him.

The personal antipathy prevalent at the time among men, even of moderate opinions, was indescribable. Speaking on the subject long afterwards,* Lord Lansdowne said:—

> It was extraordinary, the effect he had produced in this way. After Lord Melbourne's Government was formed and O'Connell became one of its supporters, Mr. Thomas Grenville, with whom I had been most intimate for many years, wrote to me, saying that he regretted he could no longer visit my house, as he could not go anywhere where he incurred the risk of meeting O'Connell. And this he did though it happened that O'Connell never had been here. Sir J. Graham's conduct in 1834 and subsequently was greatly influenced by a like aversion.

There are some passages in Greville's Journal of the 9th and 11th of April 1835, which throw light on these transactions. They tend to show the prevalent expectation among men of influence of both parties, that when the Whigs got in

* To the Author, July 23rd, 1862.

the Irish Leader must have office. The Stanleyites still hovering between them, deprecated this as against the chance of re-uniting with their old friends, and thereby depreciating their value in the eyes of Peel. The general notion seems to have been, that though beaten and pushed out for the time, the Conservatives would come back ere long. Graham played for this, and therefore wished the King to refuse making peers or recognizing O'Connell. He knew that Lord Grey would give him this advice, and he knew that he would be consulted, as he actually was when Melbourne was recalled. All this being known to Mulgrave, who was pulling hard the opposite way, points to the probability of his talking flatteringly to the Agitator without knowing whether he could make good his *un*-authorised promises or not. Realised or unrealised they would secure his personal good will, which we know somehow or other, Mulgrave actually did secure in an unbounded degree. Yet O'Connell's sagacity could not have been deceived as to the true character of the man. The passages in Greville seem to be jotted down without connection or purpose. They are therefore all the more reliable. He does not say, and it is not likely that he knew, when writing on the 11th of April, all that had taken place. In the midst of a ministerial crisis there is not time to post up guesses and intrigues among the various actors in the scene. His silence on the specific allegation respecting the Attorney-Generalship amounts to nothing; but everything he does say, both before and after the supposed negotiation, confirms the story. The intentions of O'Connell, if likewise left out had still to be ascertained. There are reasons for believing that Mulgrave, eager to secure his confidence, and without authority, led him to expect the Irish Attorney-Generalship, the office of all others for which he was fitted, and which would have gratified other feelings than those of mere ambition. Credulous and sanguine beyond ordinary men, he had already ruminated various plans and arrangements for the suitable filling of that situation. He understood thoroughly the administrative power it would enable him to

wield. To six millions of people his appointment would have been the visible embodiment and positive realisation of the statute of 1829: and it would have shortened by at least a decade the tedious and shameful struggle to make that law a reality. For six months he had cordially, without bond or bargain, lent his aid to reinstate the Whigs in power; aid without which that reinstatement must have been deferred for many a day. Now that it was effected he received without misgiving an intimation that he should be sent back to Ireland as Attorney-General. But when his expectation was communicatd to the leading members of the proposed Cabinet, it threatened to cause its premature disruption; and the only question was who would undertake the unenviable duty of disenchanting their formidable ally of the anticipations he cherished, and at the same time satisfying him that all idea of sectarian or personal exclusion was at an end. Many years after Mr. Ellice is described as narrating how he undertook the task. He said that he waited on O'Connell, and told him frankly that he was the bearer of very unwelcome tidings; that notwithstanding all he had done and had it in his power to do for the Liberal party, his best friends were unable to overcome for the moment the prejudices against him, and that unless he consented magnanimously to waive his personal claims, all chance of forming a new ministry must be abandoned. O'Connell did not hide his disappointment. He owned that he had looked forward with no little pride and satisfaction to the recognition officially of what he felt to be his due. He knew better than those who were jealous of him the healing and tranquillising effects that might be produced by his appointment. He added that "he wished for it on other grounds. He longed for the opportunity of proving to the Protestants of Ireland that when in power he could and would do them justice." No protestations however warm, or forbearance however disinterested, would ever disarm their apprehensions of Catholic ascendency, and while those apprehensions lasted, and Catholics were excluded in their

own land from their just share in the Government, peace and contentment there could never be. He had meant to fill the office as it had not been filled for many years, and with a view to generous hospitality he had told his son to make inquiries about a mansion suitable for the purpose, which he believed he had already found. The nature of the man is portrayed more faithfully in such a trait and in its frank avowal than in all the invectives and eulogies of which he was the object. Ellice did everything to soothe him, and particularly dwelt upon the difficulties of the moment, suggesting that all would be well were time allowed.*

Not a word or look betrayed O'Connell's disappointment. He was too astute to let the world without, or even the circle of his own immediate followers, know that he had been tantalized with a few hours of triumph, and then summarily compelled to stand by. What he really thought of the transaction we shall never know; but that unresentfully and magnanimously he bore his mortification is beyond dispute. He retained his seat below the gangway on the Opposition side after the House reassembled, declaring that his future course would be governed by the composition of the Irish executive. Lords Mulgrave and Morpeth might mean very well, but he had had enough of good intentions without their practical fulfilment; and remembering what had happened in 1830, he must wait until he saw further before enrolling himself as a supporter of the new Government. It was natural he should desire that, after a century and a half of exclusion, one of the ancient faith should be named chief of the bar. Next to himself O'Loghlen had the highest reputation and greatest amount of business among Catholic lawyers; and having already served as Solicitor he had, *primâ facie*, the best claim to be made Attorney-General. O'Connell pressed earnestly for his friend's nomination.

At length the protracted doubts and misgivings came to

* Letter from Mr. Justice Keogh to Sir Colman O'Loghlen, December 22nd, 1874.

an end, and early on the 18th of April the restored Premier wrote to the re-appointed President of the Council:

> I have just received the King's acquiescence in the arrangements, expressed in terms which imply that he is upon the whole not dissatisfied with them, and he commands that everybody should be at St. James's at half-past two, in order to kiss hands, &c.*

On the same day the new Premier informed the House of Lords that the administration was complete, with the exception of the Keepership of the Great Seal, which for the present would be held in commission. He reiterated succinctly and clearly the measures which would be submitted to Parliament during the session, of which the principal were those for the reform of municipal corporations in England, and for the extinction of Irish tithes. His tone was firm, but unprovocative of controversy. Party feelings ran too high to let the occasion pass for sharp questioning as to the policy of the new Cabinet. Lord Alvanley, a wit and man of fashion, read a letter lately published by O'Connell to the people of Ireland, in which he re-asserted his undiminished faith in the Repeal of the Union as the only certain remedy for the evils of that country; and as it had been publicly announced that he and his friends had agreed at Lichfield House to support ministers it was not unreasonable to ask what were the terms of the compact, and what were the opinions of the Government regarding the maintenance of the Empire. Brougham, impatient to play the new character he had assigned himself as spokesman-in-chief, and the protector of the party in power, rose to answer the question, but the peers would not endure his interference, and called for the First Minister. His reply was calm and unequivocal:

> I am asked how far I coincide in the opinions of Mr. O'Connell about the Union with Ireland; I answer, not at

* From South Street, April 18th, 1835.

all. I am asked whether I am to have the aid of Mr. O'Connell? I reply that I cannot tell. And, lastly on what terms? I answer, I have made no terms with him whatever.

In the Commons, as soon as the writ was moved for the County of Monaghan in the room of Mr. Perrin, who had accepted the office of Attorney-General for Ireland, O'Connell rose, and, followed by his son and other parliamentary friends, crossed the floor in token of his satisfaction, and took his seat on the ministerial side, a place he never quitted during the six ensuing years. The writ for Dungarvan, in the room of Mr. O'Loghlen, who again became Solicitor-General, was moved soon afterwards. The new Attorney-General was by some years the senior of his colleague in the profession, and there was a general feeling in Ireland that the self-denial which he had shown in refusing office deserved the recompense it had at length received.

Perrin was a grave and moderate man; his utterance was slow and not always free from effort. To the praise of eloquence he did not aspire; and, though keenly appreciative of the force and value of humour, as an advocate he seldom if ever indulged in its use; but his words were weighty, his reasoning concise and clear. Great experience at the bar had made him thoroughly aware of every fault and flaw in the administration of justice. For many years he had gone the North-East Circuit, which embraced the counties of Down, Antrim, and Armagh, where the traditional strife between Orangemen and Ribandmen led oftenest to breaches of the peace; and one of his first acts, as Attorney-General, was to rescind the rule till then observed by the Crown prosecutors generally, to put aside Catholics when called on the jury panel, in cases involving party and religious feeling. He well knew that at first such a change would probably entail failure to obtain convictions; and he foresaw the ill use to be made of failure. But he never wavered, therefore,

in his belief that this price must be paid for the more than compensating good of vindicating the administration of the law from the demoralising and destructive suspicion in the minds of the multitude, that the scales of justice were not true. "As long as that suspicion lasts," he was often heard to say, "loyalty, except from the teeth out, you have no right to expect. If we Protestants, when accused rightly or wrongly of crime, were not allowed to have one of our own creed among the jurors, what sort of loyalists would we be?" Melbourne entered heartily into this view, which may be regarded as embodying the fundamental principle on which the whole of the new administrative régime in Ireland was based. Its announcement was met with clamour, and subsequent adherence to it, on critical occasions, was made the ground of fierce political attack. But who would now think of going back?

From many quarters the suggestion came that a new Under-Secretary should be appointed to carry out in detail the principles of the new policy. If a system of government, practically different from what had gone before, was to be tried, the whole mechanism ought to be in harmony, and the whole of its materials ought to be homogeneous. The hybrid system had proved a cunning folly, barren of good. If men were expected to have faith in the efficacy of the proposed experiment that impartial laws should be administered impartially, and that to loyalise a people the best way is to treat them as if they were loyal—doubt and distrust must not be kept alive by the retention in the confidential working of the government of one who had been the trusted and faithful instrument of the repudiated method of rule. Sir William Gossett was an honourable man, who for seven years had administered the daily functions of the executive under the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, and Sir Robert Peel, and he was never suspected of disobeying or neglecting their instructions. In the main their instructions were the same: to maintain authority, to discourage Orangeism, to punish Ribandism, to conciliate the gentry

by courtesy and patronage, and to treat the ill-humour of the multitude with imperturbable contempt; discontent must be reproved as a social vice, and agitation as a political crime. How was an upright and sincere man who had been saying and doing all this for seven years to speak expressively another language and to enact effectively another *rôle?* Yet Melbourne hesitated. He had got on very well himself with Gossett when he was Home Secretary; he had found him diligent, punctual, and accurate, a gentleman, and a man who talked no nonsense; he knew all the ins and outs of the business of the Castle, who everybody was, and what the practice in each case had been. Why not let him stay, if for nothing else, to put Morpeth up to his work, and to keep Mulgrave from making mistakes about persons and things he had never seen before. In his indecision he sent for the new Attorney-General. Louis Perrin was exactly the man whose few words, clear thoughts, and earnest tone were likely to weigh with him in quiet council. His massive features, tardy gait, and slow utterance were all in keeping with the habit and ideas of the man descended from one of the Huguenots who had settled in Ireland, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He had, in common with other estimable off-shoots of the same stock, in the fine words of Grattan, "learnt the great lessons of liberty in the lair of oppression," and had vowed to take revenge for the injustice done their fathers by helping to break down the converse injustice in the land of their adoption. Firmly holding by the right of individual conscience, and fearlessly maintaining that there ought to be no peace or content in a country whose people in matters of creed and matters of opinion were not made to feel themselves equal in the eye of the law, they sympathised with O'Connell while they thought with Plunket. They were Whigs not Repealers; stubborn defenders of right and duty, but without national memories or passions. Perrin had never mixed in agitation, or spent an hour in seeking popularity; but he had refused office under previous administrations because he would not be responsible for the

provocation their inconsistent policy gave to direspect for law. Now, for the first time he had hope that the long deferred promises of 1801 and 1829 would be fulfilled, and that, without loss of self-respect, men like himself might serve the Crown. In answer to the question why he thought it necessary that a new Under-Secretary should be made, he said in a low, earnest tone—"My lord, he will be your right eye, and if we have to spend our time plucking old beams out of it, your Government will not go straight." This settled the question; and Lord Spencer, having had fortunately sufficient knowledge of Thomas Drummond to believe in his capacity and fitness for the post, he was soon afterwards appointed, Sir William Gossett being given the easier and more lucrative place of Sergeant-at-Arms.

It must be owned that the choice was venturous. Drummond was unconnected by family or education with a country he was to take an important part in governing, and his superiors in the department had had even less experience in it than himself. But unlike them he had served a long apprenticeship of the very best kind, during a period of thirteen years in different parts of Ireland. Engaged from the commencement in the active work of the Ordnance Survey, he had had rare opportunities of observing dispassionately the actual condition of the country and its people. He had gone to Ireland open-hearted, clear-headed, and highly accomplished, without distracting prejudices or antecedents, and with the duty before him of measuring and marking every characteristic feature, territorial boundary and line of demarkation between waste and cultivation, creative industry and desponding idleness, which was a splendid course of study for an ardent and aspiring mind, and nobly he made use of its opportunities. It was necessary to talk to him when Under-Secretary about the practical remedies for practical evils by legislative or administrative means to estimate the variety of his intimate knowledge of circumstances requiring to be considered, and his readiness of resource. Melbourne said truly of Perrin that he had less of the Irishman about

him than any one he had ever known; it might with equal truth be said of Drummond that he had become more patriotically devoted to the interests of his adopted country than half her sons born in the land.

When complete the Administration stood thus:—

Viscount Melbourne . .	*First Lord of the Treasury.*
Marquis of Lansdowne .	*President of the Council.*
Viscount Duncannon .	*Privy Seal.*
T. Spring Rice . . .	*Chancellor of Exchequer.*
Lord J. Russell . . .	*Home Secretary.*
Viscount Palmerston .	*Foreign Secretary.*
Lord Glenelg . . .	*Colonial Secretary.*
Lord Holland . . .	*Duchy of Lancaster.*
Sir J. C. Hobhouse . .	*President of India Board.*
Earl of Auckland . .	*First Lord of Admiralty.*
C. Poulett Thomson . .	*President of Board of Trade.*
Viscount Howick . .	*Secretary at War.*

Not in the Cabinet—

Marquis Conyngham .	*Lord Chamberlain.*
Lord C. Fitzroy . . .	*Vice Chamberlain.*
Duke of Argyle . . .	*Lord Steward.*
Earl of Lichfield . . .	*Postmaster-General.*
Earl of Albemarle . .	*Master of the Horse.*
Mr. Labouchere . . .	*Master of the Mint.*
Hon. G. S. Byng . .	*Comptroller of the Household.*
E. J. Stanley . } Francis Baring } . .	*Secretaries of the Treasury.*
Sir John Campbell . .	*Attorney-General.*
Sir C. Rolfe	*Solicitor-General.*
Earl of Erroll . . .	*Master of the Buckhounds.*
Sir H. Vivian . . .	*Master-General of Ordnance.*
Sir H. Parnell . . .	*Treasurer of the Navy.*
Charles Wood . . .	*Secretary to Admiralty.*

Ireland.

Earl of Mulgrave . .	*Lord Lieutenant.*
Lord Plunket . . .	*Lord Chancellor.*
Viscount Morpeth . .	*Chief Secretary.*
Mr. Perrin	*Attorney-General.*
Mr. O'Loghlen . . .	*Solicitor-General.*
Mr. Drummond . . .	*Under-Secretary.*

Scotland.

Mr. J. A. Murray . .	*Lord Advocate.*
Mr. Cuninghame . .	*Solicitor-General.*
Sir Rufane Donkin . .	*Surveyor-Gen. of Ordnance.*
Sir A. Leith Hay . .	*Clerk of Ordnance.*
Col. G. Anson . . .	*Storekeeper of Ordnance.*

Lords of the Treasury.

Lord Seymour.	Mr. R. More O'Ferrall.
Mr. Ord.	Mr. R. Stuart.

Lords of the Admiralty.

Lord Dalmeny.	Sir E. T. Trowbridge.
Sir W. Parker.	Hon. G. Elliott.
Sir Charles Adam.	

Lords in Waiting.

Marquis of Headfort.	Viscount Ashbrook.
Marquis of Queensberry.	Lord Byron.
Lord James O'Brien.	Lord Templemore.
Lord Adolphus Fitz-Clarence.	Lord Torrington.
	Lord Gardner.
Earl of Fife.	Lord Elphinstone.
Viscount Falkland.	

Hon. Fox Maule . . .	*Under-Secretary, Home.*
Hon. T. F. Strangways .	*Under-Secretary, Foreign.*
Sir George Grey . . .	*Under-Secretary, Colonial.*
R. Cutlar Fergusson .	*Judge-Advocate.*

CHAPTER V.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE KING AND THE PEERS.

Governor-Generalship of India—Speech on Irish Church—Discontent of William IV.—Policy of Russia—Municipal Reform—Letter from Lord Ashburton.

One of the first questions the new Cabinet had to consider was whether the recent appointment of Lord Heytesbury to the Governorship of India, should be superseded or confirmed. Sir John Hobhouse was induced to believe that this, the most splendid prize in the gift of the executive, had been given away after his predecessor knew that his own official existence was virtually at an end; and that Lord Heytesbury had hastened his departure from England in order to lessen the chances of his nomination being cancelled. Acting upon this impression he at once proposed his recall, and his colleagues acquiescing, a fast sailing vessel overtook the new Viceroy at Lisbon; and on his return to England, Lord Auckland was named in his stead. The chairman and deputy-chairman of the Board of Directors grumbled, and the King did not pretend to approve. But on the morrow of party triumph the spoils are for the victors: and it is unhappily too true that the highest trusts in India have generally been treated on all sides as among the honours and rewards of party battle rather than as sacred trusts to be filled up solely with reference to the previously proven fitness of each new trustee. Lord Heytesbury was a sensible, cautious, and painstaking man, efficient rather than dis-

tinguished as a diplomatist. Lord Auckland was a man of good parts, highly cultivated, intelligent, and astute; everybody who knew him liked him, and being needy, complaisant, and without prejudices, it was believed that he would work well in harness fashioned at home, and keep clear of quarrels with the natives about religion or race. More competent men than either had the chief places of rule over the great dependency, without incurring the jealousy of those who nominated them. There was at the time an indolent illusion that the conquest had reached its limits, and that the fear of increasing permanent debt or confessing yearly deficits, would effectually prevent fresh wars for the purpose of territorial acquisition. But it was confidently stated that neither the Tory or the Whig peer possessed even a superficial knowledge of the mysteries or miseries, the necessities or the resources of Southern Asia. Metcalf, who had spent his life there, and devoted every energy and every hour of it to the study of the great problem how India ought to be governed, had been left, as *locum tenens*, at Calcutta by Lord William Bentinck. He would have been beyond compare the fittest man for the post, but, as he said himself, the only thing he could make out for certain in the whole matter was, that neither Conservatives or Liberals at home had ever thought of him. Read by the light of subsequent events, Lord Heytesbury's friends were fairly entitled to say that he would have done better as Governor-General than his supercessor, and that therefore he ought not to have been recalled. But his subsequent viceroyalty of Ireland did not bring out strikingly any of the rare administrative qualities with which Sir Robert Peel would, it is said, have credited him. With many months of warning that famine was at hand, he left the country wholly unprepared to meet that dire calamity, either as regarded measures of employment or measures of relief; and the affliction was certainly enhanced thereby. But, whatever his good qualities or shortcomings may have been, it must be owned that Lord Auckland was a bad appointment. He

had not earned it by any services worth naming: he did not vindicate it by the display of any qualities worth recording. The mistaken partiality of Lansdowne, and the party zeal of Hobhouse and Palmerston blinded them to his unsuitability for so arduous a post, and misled them into urging his appointment. But Melbourne must bear his share of the responsibility in having added one more to the long list of evil precedents of which our Indian and Colonial chronicles are full.

Brougham lost no time in cutting out work for himself. In his place in the House of Lords, he spoke a pamphlet full of characteristic vivacity and vigour, giving his reasons for propounding a scheme of primary instruction, of which the outlines were drawn in nine resolutions, of the widest if not the wisest comprehensiveness of the objects in view. To the general expression regarding the duty of Parliament to provide the means of elementary education for the children of toil, the Premier readily assented. But his habitual circumspection bade him to beware of accepting pledges whose redemption, in his day, seemed of doubtful possibility.

To the first resolution he had no objection, except that it stated positively facts with the truth of which he was unacquainted; nor to the second, third, fourth, or fifth, if it were understood that they were only to be acted upon as far as the funds provided by Parliament would allow. The sixth appeared to him very large, and to pledge the Government to do much, but the principle of it was right, and he thought the establishment in the first instance of one of the seminaries for the instruction of schoolmasters would be sufficient. It must also be considered how it was to be done, and they would be met, as in all parts of the plan, by religious differences and difficulties. The eighth and ninth resolutions were of a very serious character. He agreed in most of the statements in them, but surely it would be unwise for either

House of Parliament to pledge itself by resolution to principles which it might find itself hereafter unable or unwilling to carry into effect. He thought they would be afraid to produce these resolutions in the shape of a bill.*

Brougham had accomplished all he wanted by expounding his scheme; and Melbourne, who truly discerned its utter prematurity in the existing temper of the Opposition, quietly allowed the question to stand over to a more convenient season. Just five-and-thirty years later it arrived, after he and Brougham and all their chief opponents had been gathered to the tomb.

In redemption of the pledge on which ministers had ousted their opponents, a bill for the settlement of Irish Tithes, containing the appropriation clause, was carried through the Lower House in the course of July, and brought up to the Lords. Melbourne thought it the most fitting occasion to set forth fully the principles and convictions on which the government of Ireland was to be carried on; and in moving the second reading he delivered a speech carefully and deliberately prepared, and which he intended to be a manifesto of his Irish administration:—

It now becomes my duty to attempt to induce your Lordships to make another effort for the final settlement of the question of tithes in Ireland, a subject which has given rise to so much trouble, vexation, and evil, which has produced that unfortunate disregard and contempt of the law that has now for so long a period prevailed in that country. I am now called upon to attempt to persuade your Lordships to make another effort, in order, to use the language of the petition which has been presented, and which is signed by so many of the prelates of the Established Church, to restore tranquillity to that disturbed portion of his Majesty's dominions. Lest I should forget it your Lordships will perhaps allow me to say, with respect to that petition presented by the most

* Confidental letter, June 19th, 1835.

rev. prelate at the head of the Church, and just now read at length, that I do not think it fairly represents the object of the Bill; neither can I agree in the language in which the petition is couched, nor in the consequences which it anticipates from the measure. At the same time, although I disagree with the objections urged in that petition, I do not consider them to be unfairly stated, nor do I take exception to any part of that document, except to those imputations which are cast by it upon the practice and opinions of the Roman Catholic Church. Language of such a character as the following should not be employed on such an occasion nor directed to such an object: "in a land where disaffection to the British name, contempt of legal authority, and blind obedience to the Papal See, appear in their undisguised forms." This, my Lords, is not charity and conciliation, nor are these the expressions which the ministers of our religion should hold towards those who profess another faith; it is language totally unbecoming and uncharitable. It is in the highest degree impolitic and more particularly inconsistent with the statements generally made, and the opinions held and professed on that subject. You charge the Roman Catholics with superstition, with implicit obedience, with an unreasoning adherence to error, and with a blind submission to their priesthood. Recollect the more superstitious a religion is the more unreasoning and tenacious is the attachment and devotion of its adherents; the more impatient are they of anything in the shape of contumely or insult, and if you employ any weapon of this description, you do your utmost to counteract your own objects, and to build up insuperable obstacles to your own success. Your Lordships will forgive me if I repeat a very old story from a very ancient historian upon this subject, a story which has always appeared to me to be pregnant with wisdom, delivered in a form striking and impressive from its simplicity. It is said by Herodotus, that it was a ques-

tion in those times, whether the crimes and extravagancies of Cambyses, the conqueror of Egypt, were to be attributed to malignity of disposition or to derangement of intellect. "For my part," concludes the historian, "I consider him to have been mad: and for this single reason, that being anxious to establish his dominion and power in Egypt, he yet outraged and insulted the religious feelings of the Egyptians." Depend upon it, those who are anxious to establish their influence in any country, ought not to begin by offending the religion of the majority of the community."

After pointing out that the opposition to taxes in the nature of tithes was not confined to Ireland, but was then epidemic in Europe, Melbourne continued:—

My Lords,—I know I shall be told, as has been set forth in the petition of the right rev. prelates just read to your Lordships, that the tithe is an original charge upon the land; that it is, in fact, part of the property, of which the tithe receiver is a part owner, and not an incumbrancer. Political economists wish to prove that it is paid not by the proprietor of the land but by the consumer of the produce. Both these positions may be true; and I believe they are so. But every statesman of a mind at once inventive and practical, will consider, with respect to every measure, and particularly with respect to matters of finance and pecuniary charge, that there are two material considerations to be kept in view, the fiscal effect of a measure, and its moral effect. In imposing a tax it is most important to be certain in what quarter the burden of it really falls; it is hardly less essential to consider, where it is thought and believed to fall; and my Lords, your Lordships may establish clearly that the tithe is a tenth part of the produce belonging originally to one party, whilst the other nine parts belong to another; or you may prove, by the most conclusive train of reasoning, that the tithe is not paid by the tenant of

the land, who appears to pay it, but is paid by the consumers in the price of the produce. You may reason to this effect so long as you please; you may illustrate it by the most felicitous examples; you may elucidate it by the clearest deductions; you may place it before the people in the most easy and popular form; but you will never persuade the bulk of mankind that it is not paid by those who give the produce, or lay down the money in the first instance; and that the burden does not really fall, where, according to common sense, according to the eyes and ears it appears to fall:—

The speaker having then gone in detail through the various provisions of the Bill, stated that the principal ground on which he rested it was the anomalous, and paradoxical state of the Established Church in Ireland, with relation to the population of that country:—

My Lords,—I have often had occasion to state that the circumstance of a great Protestant Establishment in the midst of a great Catholic population must be productive of great difficulties; such difficulties have existed at all times, since the existence of the anomaly which I have noticed. The responsibility of this state of things, we, in our complacency and self-approbation, are very apt to cast upon the conduct of those who have gone before us; upon the centuries during which we acknowledged that Ireland has been subjected to every form and mode of misrule and bad government. In our vanity we sit in judgment and pronounce very absolute condemnation upon the measures and conduct of former kings, former ministers, former parliaments, and former generals. We are perpetually exclaiming, This was wrong and that was wrong; he should have done this; he should have done that; what blindness to pursue this line of policy! what an erroneous judgment to adopt these measures! Why, my Lords, it is probable that if those, whom we so positively condemn, were here to defend themselves, it is

probable, I say, that they would be able to show in one sentence, perhaps in one word, that we know nothing about the matter, and that amidst the prejudices which then prevailed, under the influences to which they were subjected, in the general state of circumstances by which they were surrounded, they could in fact pursue no other course than that which they did pursue,—and most certainly upon this question of religion and religious establishment, they would have something to say for themselves, something to urge in their own defence and on their own behalf. They would say, A Roman Catholic population and a Protestant Establishment is a state of things which we never either contemplated or intended; our policy might be violent, our measures might be cruel, our objects might be impracticable; but still we had definite and reasonable objects in view. We intended the eradication of the Roman Catholic and the substitution of the Protestant faith—such was our end, and such our means from the reign of Henry VIII. down to the enactment of the Penal Code. If you abandon our policy, as you have done, you must abandon it entirely, and you must adopt not only a different, but precisely the opposite course."

He then alluded to the difficulties in which this anomalous state of ecclesiastical affairs had involved the Government, but contended that the maintenance of a large Protestant establishment where there was a small or no Protestant population was not consistent with any principle or policy:—

What character does a Protestant clergyman (under such circumstances) bear? Pastor he is not, for he has no flock to tend, no cure of souls; missionary he is not—he cannot be an effectual missionary, because he is not disinterested—he has no part of the character which belongs to and constitutes a missionary to convert the heathen; but supposing he is considered as a missionary, I must say,

referring to what has been stated in the petition from the Protestant prelates of Ireland which has been presented this evening, and in which stress has been laid on the gross superstition of the Catholic Church, that much as I may lament the great errors of that Church, and much as I may deprecate some of its doctrines, yet I, grounding myself upon the authority of the prudent and tolerant doctrines delivered by the reverend prelate at the head of our Church upon a former evening, assert that the main opinions of that Church, being essentially the same as those of our own, it is not fitting to treat the Roman Catholics with insult, as if they were worshippers of Juggernaut, or the votaries of any other barbarous superstition. At the same time, my Lords, that I propose this measure, I am fully aware of the effects which it will produce, and of the objections which may be urged again. I am deeply sensible and much concerned at the impression which I feel that it will make. I cannot conceal from myself that it will be in the first instance and for a certain time, a heavy blow and a great discouragement to Protestantism in Ireland; that it will be also a great triumph to the adverse party. I am well aware that it is not the same thing to destroy as never to have constituted; to demolish as never to have built up; but this evil, which I trust will be but temporary, is forced upon me by the untoward circumstances which I have already described. I cannot avoid it, and that which I cannot avoid I must submit to with as much patience as I can command, and temper with as much remedy and alteration as it is in my power to administer. I admit the great peril and danger which necessarily attends upon and accompanies such mighty and fundamental changes. The shake and convulsion which they cause, render doubtful the safety not only of the Establishment, but of the Constitution itself. It is, however, only in popular governments that such fundamental alterations can be made consistently with public

tranquillity. The gradual manner in which they are introduced, and the public discussion of the principles exhaust and expend much of the zeal and violence of the contending parties, and the mind of the people is prepared for their adoption, before they are actually carried into effect. Amongst the many wise and prudent remarks delivered by Sir Robert Peel in the course of that struggle for the government of the country which marked the commencement of the present session, one observation peculiarly commanded my respect and approbation. I do not remember the exact words, and cannot express the substance with the same force and felicity as the honourable baronet, but the import was that his advice to the Crown had been on no account to divest itself of that moral force which it derived from restraining its action strictly within the limits of the Constitution. With a voice of much less weight and authority, but with equal sincerity I would venture to address to the people of Ireland and of England the same advice which Sir Robert Peel gave to the Crown. I would suggest that they must not attempt to urge on or carry any measure which they may deem one of justice to themselves by illegality or violence; and that any attempt of that nature must only weaken and contract that influence which it is their wish to strengthen and extend. My Lords, I have little more to add than to move that this Bill be now read a second time. I ask your Lordships to give it a fair, attentive, and serious consideration. I beg your Lordships to weigh well the responsibility under which you are acting. I beg you to consider that you stand at the head of a great and mighty empire, an empire greater than has existed since the downfall of Rome, and that its future destinies are committed to your charge. It is now many years since Mr. Burke, imitating the great orators of antiquity exclaimed, in Parliament, 'We may have rivals; we may have enemies: I do not fear the power of our rivals; I do not fear

the greatness of those enemies; but there is one thing which I do fear, and that is our own power and our own greatness. Our Indian empire is an awful thing." Since that time not only that empire in India, but the whole of our territories have swelled, and been increased and augmented by acquisition, by conquest, and by their own internal growth and expansion. With an empire so vast, extended, and scattered in every part of the globe, and containing within its very bosom every form of government, every code of law, every modification of society, and every race and condition of man—it is impossible to expect that there ever should arrive a time when there will not exist in some part of such vast dominions some circumstance which creates uneasiness and alarm. I may, my Lords, be sanguine; I may be short-sighted; perhaps both; but it appears to me at present there is as little ground for serious apprehension, as little probability of the occurrence of trouble or danger, as it is possible at any time to look forward to. I see nothing to fear except our own differences and dissensions, and these I cannot conceal it from your Lordships, I look upon not without real and grave alarm. In this state of affairs I propose to you this measure. I pray you to consider it without any narrow views, and casting away from you all prejudices. I pray you to consider it with reference to the extent of that great empire, the affairs of which you have to administer, and which by sound and enlightened policy may be maintained and aggrandized, but the safety and continuance of which cannot be secured, unless you legislate according to the interests and feelings which prevail in each constituent part of his Majesty's dominions." *

But no argument or eloquence could avail, and the Bill was rejected by the Peers.

* 'Hansard's Parliamentary Debates,' August 20th, 1835, pp. 715-729.

Lord Cloncurry, always accessible and good-natured, wrote to the Minister representing the services and claims of W. H. Curran and A. R. Blake; he recommended the promotion of the former to the Chief Commissionership of Insolvency; and that the latter, who held the place of Chief Remembrancer of the Exchequer, should be made a Privy Councillor. He likewise drew attention to the character and standing of Robert Holmes, one of the most learned, eloquent, and independent men of his time, but who had been hitherto dissociated, it was supposed, from the party in office by reason of the enmity existing between him and the Irish Chancellor. The Premier replied that the persons mentioned had not been neglected: an offer of advancement had been made to Mr. Holmes, which had been declined; there would be some difficulty in arranging Curran's succeeding Burrowes; "but what could they possibly do for Blake? Making him a Privy Councillor was nonsense: he would be a noodle to wish it. There were, in his opinion, objections; and if he got it, depend upon it it would not give him three hours' gratification."*

This was an instance of his way of thinking aloud and committing himself in conversation or on paper to first impressions, which on re-consideration he cheerfully retracted. Mr. Blake was anything but a noodle; and as up to the period in question no Catholic had been admitted a member of the Privy Council, it was very far from nonsense to desire that this important exclusion should be broken down. When put in its true aspect the minister frankly owned the importance of the question, and Mr. Blake, with others of his creed, were added to the list of those who were entitled to prefix Right Honourable to their names. In due time Mr. Curran obtained the professional advancement he desired. At the suggestion of the new Attorney-General, and with the unreserved approval of the Chancellor, who disclaimed earnestly the wish to exclude Mr. Holmes from any honour or dignity of his profession, an endeavour was made by the Viceroy to induce

* Letter, June 4th, 1835.

him to accept the distinction of Sergeant; which in Ireland is limited to three members of the inner bar, and is generally understood to lead to the appointment of Solicitor-General. Lord Mulgrave pressed the complimentary office upon him, saying that the Government wished to strengthen itself by the adhesion of men like him, and hoped for the benefit of his services ere long as an adviser of the Crown. He replied courteously but coldly that he had no wish for office. "But you have already assisted us by consenting in 1831 to be a member of the National Education Board." He laughed grimly and said: "Yes, my Lord, I thought the people wanted education, but I don't think I want promotion." Early in life he was the intimate friend of the ill-fated Robert Emmett, whose sister he had married not very long before the attempt at revolt in 1803, fatally identified with his name. Holmes and some others were arrested on suspicion; and the Habeas Corpus being suspended they were kept in strict confinement without trial or definite accusation until the following year. When looking through the bars of his prison chamber in Bedford Tower he was shot at by a sentry of one of the fencible regiments then on guard. The murderous bullet narrowly missed its aim, striking the mullion of the lattice close beside him. A letter written on the instant to the Viceroy described and denounced his ill-treatment so forcibly that Lord Whitworth was moved; and like his pro-consular prototype of old, sent for him that he might for himself hear and see the man whom bonds could not bow to mute or mock submission. His Excellency inquired if he had not been the relation and confidant of Emmett. "I was his friend and relation," he said firmly, "but if I had been in his confidence I would not have been taken in my bed." His interrogator failed to draw anything from him, but calm and laconic protests against the injustice of his prolonged captivity. After he was suffered to withdraw Lord Whitworth exclaimed: "This is an honest, and I believe a loyal man," and the order of release was forthwith signed. Then, for the first time he

learned the sad details of the memorable trial, in which his infatuated kinsman hardly contravened the charge of treason, but sought to clear the memory of his desperate enterprise from the reproach of wantonness or recklessness of human life, in language which after seventy years has not ceased to ring in the popular ear. So little of controversy characterised the proceedings that the relentless judge who presided would have dispensed with any lengthened comment on the evidence by counsel for the prosecution. The work of supererogation devolved, unhappily for his fame, on Plunket, who had been intimate in earlier days with Emmett's family, but who did not shrink from urging on the jury, and through them upon the community at large, the fearful responsibility which an enthusiast, however single-minded, incurs who calls an ignorant and impoverished multitude to arms. The cause of authority was not served by this pitiless demand for exemplary justice. The best friends of Plunket would gladly have it forgotten; it probably added not a feather's weight in the scale of condemnation; but by Holmes it never was forgiven. He resumed his profession, where he soon made a name for learning, intrepidity, and discretion. Though he never took any part in active politics, an attempt was made by Mr. Joy and others to exclude him from the circuit mess on account of his opinions; but to the credit of the bar it failed. Mr. Joy subsequently owned that he had been in the wrong, and Holmes readily resumed the terms of old companionship with him. But to Plunket he would never give his hand, or accept from him the offer of a silk gown. While he was struggling to the front the judgment-seat was frequently profaned by manifestations of political aversion. And the most shameless offender in this respect was Chief Justice Norbury, who, when remonstrated with repeatedly in the course of a trial for libel, by Mr. Holmes, for admitting statements that in point of law were not evidence, ruthlessly muttered that many a traitor had been sent to a scaffold on no better testimony. "I don't pretend to say that many an innocent man has not suffered on this sort of proof; all I contend for is that it

would not be evidence in an action on a bill of exchange." Melbourne was made fully aware of the inflexible rectitude and solid worth of the man, and he would gladly have done him honour. But no blandishments or arguments could make Holmes exchange the garb of life-long independence for the livery of power.

The First Minister did his best to allay the irritation which his restoration caused the King. In the transaction of business his rare command of features, tone, and pleasant idiomatic phrase enabled him generally to smooth difficulties, quiet fears, and charm away the evil spirit of distrust. He had won the game of power, and it was not in his nature to betray the least degree of exultation. He made great allowance for the weakness of wounded pride, and the fretfulness of declining years. William IV. had shown him little consideration: he would requite by showing more than was expected of him. Whether the peevish and desponding sovereign appreciated fully the conduct of the statesman is more than doubtful. Towards him individually when alone admitted to the Closet he was not ungracious or unkind, but towards other members of the Cabinet his words were full of heat, and his demeanour sometimes almost hostile. On subjects connected with national defence he was peculiarly excitable; the militia had, he said, been too long neglected. George II. had disfavoured it, preferring foreign mercenaries; but George III. liked the militia, and so did he. He thought it would be an excellent measure to embody them. The Home Secretary told him Parliament did not fear invasion, and would not therefore agree to the expense. He said, "he did, and thought those who objected to preparations on the ground of cost were penny wise and pound foolish. He heard that Russia had one hundred thousand men ready for embarkation in the Baltic; he did not know how his Lordship felt, but he owned they made him shake in his shoes."* The subject frequently recurred, and was calculated to cause uneasiness in those to whom such language was addressed.

* Hobhouse, vol. iii. p. 142, June 26th.

Melbourne, who knew him long and well, said it was temper, not political purpose; and he pointed to the military estimates of Peel, three months before, which were less in the number of men asked for, than for twenty years preceding. His Majesty seldom, if ever, indulged in these ebullitions when alone with Melbourne or Palmerston. He reserved the overflow of his misgivings for others, among whom was the mild and diffident Secretary for the Colonies; and matters at length went so far that it seemed doubtful whether it would be possible to carry on safely and with decorum, the business of government. Ministers were bound by their oath to keep secret the errors as well as counsels of the Crown; but what if the circle were capriciously enlarged, and subordinate functionaries were exposed to similar explosions of wrath? The First Minister felt moreover that though for himself he might forgive and try to forget the petulance and perversity he deplored, he had no right to keep in ignorance the men who had agreed to have him for their chief; with whom jointly and severally he had undertaken the guardianship of the state; but the custody of whose honour and the exercise of whose discretion had not been unconditionally placed in his hands. There was risk of disunion and disheartenment from directing attention to quick-sands below the surface which it did not seem easy to avoid; but the risk must be run, for confidence so critical he could not withhold.

Lord Gosford a man of excellent character and judgment, had been named Governor of Canada; and no objection had been raised to his appointment. At a meeting of the Cabinet on the 11th of July, Melbourne addressed his colleagues: "Gentlemen, you may as well know how you stand," and then proceeded to read a memorandum of a conversation after the review the day before, between Lord Gosford and the King. His Majesty said, "Mind what you are about in Canada. By —— I will never consent to alienate the Crown lands, nor to make the Council elective. Mind me, my Lord, the Cabinet is not my Cabinet; they had better take care, or, by ——, I will have them impeached. You are

a gentleman I believe, I have no fear of you; but take care what you do."* The ministers present stared at one another, but agreed that it was better to take no notice of what had occurred, and see if the excitement would pass away. The same day he gave excellent advice to M. Dedel, the Dutch Minister, bidding him let the King of Holland know that he was ignorant of his true position, and that Belgium was lost irrecoverably. Lord Gosford was assured of the confidence of those who were responsible for his appointment, and was advised to proceed on his difficult mission without delay. The royal assent had about the same time been obtained in writing to the introduction of the Irish Tithe Bill, which contained the disputed Appropriation Clause; and there was no other legislative question on which difficulty seemed likely to arise. Hobhouse owns that though he was uniformly treated with kindness and consideration in audience on the affairs of his department, he shared at times the doubts of others whether incivilities that appeared gratuitous and unseemly were not prompted in some degree by a hope that they might provoke resignations and lead thereby to a break up of the Government. Lord Frederick FitzClarence, who saw with concern from day to day all that was going on, told him that his father had much to bear, being beset by the Duke of Cumberland and the Duchess of Gloucester by day, and by the Queen at night. "It seemed clear to me that if we continued in office it would be entirely owing to the good sense and good manners of our chief, who knew how to deal with his Master, as well as with his colleagues, and never, that I saw, made a mistake in regard to either. I must add, that when a stand was to be made on anything considered to be a vital principle of his Government he was as firm as a rock."†

Lord Gosford was advised to take no notice of what had passed, and abide by his instructions, which would be specific and clear. When these were first submitted for approval, his Majesty broke out violently against the use of

* Hobhouse's 'Recollections,' vol. iii. † Hobhouse.

certain words, saying "No! my Lord, I will not have that word; strike out 'conciliatory; strike out 'liberal.'" And then he added, "You cannot wonder at my making these difficulties with a Ministry that has been forced upon me." However, as Glenelg went on reading, his Majesty got more calm. He approved of what was said about the Legislative Council, and the territorial revenues. In short, he approved of the instructions generally on that day, and also on the following Monday; but when Glenelg went into the Closet two days after, he was very sulky and indeed rude; and objected to some things to which he had previously consented. Melbourne was told by Glenelg how he had been treated, and when he went in, the King said he hoped he had not been uncivil to Lord Glenelg, on which the First Minister made only a stiff bow. The King took the reproof most becomingly; for when Glenelg went in a second time, his Majesty was exceedingly kind to him, and said he "approved of every word of the instructions," and remarked that he was not like William III., who often signed what he did not approve. He would not do that, he was not disposed to infringe on the liberty of any of his subjects, but he must preserve his own prerogative.* The storm being over the afternoon proved more serene. At the Council all was sunshine; and though the Chief Justice Denman being detained at Guildhall, kept the King waiting a long while, he received his apologies when he came very kindly, asked where he lived, and invited him to Windsor, adding, when he had gone through the Recorders' Report, "I hope you won't hang *me*, my Lord." †

With a view to economy it was proposed by the War department to reduce the permanent staff of the militia, which for some time had been by successive Governments allowed to remain little more than a nominal force, neither the Duke of Wellington or Lord Hill being disposed to recommend its increase or embodiment, and choosing rather to rely when necessary upon more extensive enlistment for the line.

* Hobhouse, July 15th. † Idem.

William IV. had however become possessed with the idea that it was indispensable to the safety of the realm to resuscitate the ancient means of local armament. Upon various occasions he had sought to impress this view upon his Ministers, without evoking any other than the sort of deferential acquiescence which practically implied nothing. His Majesty was led to believe that his patriotic suggestions were merely trifled with; and when his assent was asked in Council to the proposal for the further reduction of the militia staff, he was much excited, and exclaimed with great vehemence:

> Nothing should induce me to assent to this, but for two reasons; one is that I do not wish to expose those colonels who have deserted their duty and done so much to injure this constitutional force; the other is that I am resolved the system shall be put upon a better footing next session of Parliament. My Lords, I am an old man—older than any of your Lordships—I therefore know more than any of you. In 1756, George II. had as I have now, what was called a Whig Ministry; that Ministry originated a Militia Bill, to form a constitutional defence of the kingdom. George II. had not the advantages which his successors possessed. He opposed the bill, and he was seconded by certain persons in different counties, some from one motive, some from another, perhaps subserviency; but his ministers wisely persevered and carried their measure; since which time, this great force has been kept up as it ought to be, and shall be, in spite of agitators in Ireland and agitators in England; for, my Lords, I dread to think what might be the consequences if Russia were to attack us unprepared. I say I never will consent to the destruction of this force, and early in the next session of Parliament, whoever may be, and whoever are, ministers, I will have the militia restored to a proper state. I say this, not only before my confidential advisers, but before others (Charles Greville and two or three others of the household) because I wish to have my sentiments known.

Such was the substance and in great part the very words of his Majesty's harangue. We looked at one another. Lord Melbourne was very black and very haughty; I thought he would have broken out.* He preserved, however, his self-control, and thereby escaped the mischief and scandal of an altercation, which once begun must have ended either in a humiliating retractation on the part of the King, or in a second attempt within twelve months to get rid of an administration having the confidence of the House of Commons. Melbourne was at heart a royalist, and deplored every act of unwisdom and every rash speech tending to lower the Crown in the estimation of the people. The declaration that his Majesty wished his treatment of his responsible advisers to be generally known, might have provoked, if it did not justify disclosures that would have raised public excitement to the highest pitch and stimulated passions and expedients of which few were dreaming. The cry for economy had indeed somewhat abated with improving times; but it was still recognised as one pre-eminently just, by Parliament and the press; and as already observed, none had gone greater lengths in cutting down military expenditure than the Conservative Cabinet recently displaced. Melbourne, Palmerston, Lansdowne, and others, had, in point of feeling, as little sympathy with a policy of parsimony where national interests were supposed to be in peril, as any men of their day; and had William IV., instead of indulging in passionate utterances on all sorts of questions, that seemed to betray personal resentment and party aims, with gravity and courtesy urged his views respecting a home guard, and the expediency of taking the opinion of naval and military authorities on the best mode of national defence, his suggestions would have been received without distrust, and would probably have led to the earlier adoption of measures eventually deemed expedient. How far the royal fears of invasion might have been confirmed it is hard to tell; but it is remarkable that fifteen years later, Wellington and Peel,

* Hobhouse, July 16th.

Palmerston and Russell, concurred in having recourse to a reorganised militia in order to tranquillise alarms of a sudden descent upon the coast from a different quarter. At the next cabinet dinner, at Poulett Thomson's, the Premier read a strong letter from his Majesty on the aggressive designs of the Czar. Parliament ought to be asked, he said, for 3000 additional seamen; and frankly told that the continued encroachments of Russia warranted this demand. Lord Durham, he hoped, would not be deluded by bland assurances at St. Petersburg. In forcible terms the speech of the Emperor at Warsaw to the Polish Deputation was condemned, rendering as it did the provisions of the Treaty of Vienna no better than waste paper. It was likewise hinted that in the next speech from the throne something should be said regarding Russian schemes of aggrandisement.* The Foreign Secretary, and the First Minister were at no loss as to the source whence these ideas had been originally derived. As was said on another occasion by Spring Rice with reference to the late Lord Derby "they knew the click of the gun, and the sharpness of the fire." The Duke of Wellington had but lately ceased to advise the Sovereign confidentially as Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and though scrupulously abstinent in tendering advice when not in office upon matters of administration or patronage, he never shrank from stating his opinion when asked regarding the external relations of the country. Later on, a signal instance will be given of how completely in his mind the abiding sense of national duty superseded all considerations of party or personal jealousy. Meanwhile, he was at little pains to conceal the impressions he had brought back from the Muscovite capital ten years before. He had been sent to obtain the adhesion of Russia to the Treaty of London for the liberation of Greece; and in that object he was successful. But his calm insight into motives and professions reflected in its clear depths, dark foreshadowings of danger to European freedom. It was too soon for him to forget

* Hobhouse, iii. 177.

the energetic efforts made in 1815 to put bounds to the territorial ambition of the only power which after the reduction of France within her ancient limits menaced the independence of other states. He had played a great part himself in the transactions which brought the allies to a general congress in the hope of securing renunciation by all of desolating schemes of encroachment. But before the arrangements were completed, distrust of the over-reaching ambition of Russia led to the secret preparation of a treaty of defensive alliance between England, France, and Austria, which was furtively signed during a ball on the 3rd of January, 1815, in a bedroom at the British Embassy, by Talleyrand and Castlereagh.

Thus countermined, the sinister projects were laid aside and disowned, and no more was said about them. But though he kept distrust cropped close, it never was uprooted from his mind. In or out of power the greatness, influence, and glory of England as the natural friend of weaker states, and the objector-general to further aggrandisement by the strong, was the pride and purpose of his life. It had been proposed at Vienna that Poland should be reconstituted as a separate realm, with national institutions; Alexander pledged himself to grant the latter, but refused to give up the crown. The local liberties of the partitioned state were solemnly guaranteed, but in practice they were never conceded. The Poles in despair had made an ineffectual attempt to gain their liberties in 1832, and their mutiny had been stamped out with rigour, unrelenting and unspeakable. Still it was hoped that magnanimity might be shown for the future, though mercy was refused for the past. Palmerston, with the sanction of Lord Grey and the approval of the Duke, had sought to intercede for the prostrate nation, invoking the pledge and the covenant of Vienna. But the Czar now declared that all claims to national rights and privileges were cancelled by rebellion, and that the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was thenceforth to be incorporated with the rest of his empire. Melbourne did not differ in feeling from the

sentiments expressed in the letter of the King. And in a Cabinet some days later, he cordially supported Palmerston in offering an alliance with Austria and France to thwart the furtive projects, and to resist the encroaching tendencies of Russia. Metternich declined, however, to enter into engagements that would offend the Emperor Nicholas; and Louis Philippe was as little disposed to provoke his resentment. The proposed treaty thus fell to the ground; and it was out of the question to bring in a supplementary estimate late in the session for raising an extra body of seamen, when no overt act had been committed in breach of the peace of nations. But thenceforth there are many traces of a common understanding between the chiefs of the two great opposing parties, with regard to the duty of watching with a jealous eye the covetous designs and undermining diplomacy of the Autocrat whose foreign policy no treaties could bind, and the sudden exercise of whose peremptory will throughout his vast domains, no law or legislature even in theory pretended to control. The Duke understood too well the character of the sovereign, and had too high a sense of public honour to take advantage of any opportunities he may have had to disturb his mind with vague suggestions about foreign policy which could have no other effect than to inflame his discontent with his Whig ministers. But he gravely and consistently discountenanced the notion whenever his opinion was asked, whether by political opponent or political friend, that it was safe for an envied power like Great Britain to rely on the plausible professions of our rival for dominion in the East.

The bill to reform manifold abuses in English municipal corporations met with little opposition in the Lower House, where Sir Robert Peel signified his cordial aquiescence in its principle and scope. Lyndhurst took a different course in the Lords, whom he prevailed on to hear counsel at the bar. Sir Charles Wetherell spoke in defence of vested wrongs and of impunity in jobbing more than twelve hours; and witnesses were called to prove that

self-election by small minorities in corporate towns was the better way of choosing chief magistrates and aldermen, while a monopoly of benefits and perquisites was the best mode of securing sound and pure local Government. The Premier, aided by Holland and Lansdowne, defended the proposed enactment zealously, and with the powerful aid of the ex-Chancellor, made a good fight in debate, though often beaten in division. An amendment preserving the rights of the freemen was carried by 130 to 37; the new qualification for burgesses was raised by a like majority; Dissenters were declared ineligible to have any share in the disposal of ecclesiastical appointments; and the existing aldermen and town-clerks were to be continued for life. The Duke of Richmond daily attended the protracted sittings in committee, in which the details of the bill were discussed, warmly supporting his late colleagues in concert with whom the commission had been issued, on whose report it was founded. No persuasion, however, could detain the bulk of the Liberal peers in town, and Lyndhurst exulted in carrying every alteration he proposed against insignificant minorities. Sir J. Campbell ventured once to expostulate with him on thus bringing the Two Houses into such direct antagonism by striking out clauses which Peel himself had supported in the Commons. He replied, "Peel! what is Peel to me? D——n Peel!"* Loud was the outcry at these proceedings, and considerable the apprehension if the Commons should refuse all compromise, of a dead lock in the progress of public business, and the renewal of fierce agitation throughout the country, certain to end in the further humiliation of the Peers. Counsels more truly conservative prevailed; Lord John summoned a meeting of his supporters at Downing Street, in which he explained what amendments the Government would yield for the sake of peace, and what they would refuse. Hume was for no compromise; O'Connell answered him with his usual tact and skill, recommending strongly that they should secure without delay the vast and solid

* Life of Lyndhurst, p. 109.

privileges within their reach, and trust to time and better opportunity for winning the remainder. Sir Robert Peel, who had been for some days at Drayton, reappeared at the sitting of the House, and gave his warm support to the course recommended by Ministers. This settled the question. The Duke advised above eighty of his friends at Apsley House to yield. By way of breaking their fall, Lyndhurst engaged to execute minor mutilations. These in their turn evoked a new storm of protests and denunciations, and on the 7th of September, the Home Secretary called another meeting of his supporters to consider what should be done. Duncombe urged vehemently the policy of standing out, and undertook to furnish Lord John with a list of peers who would give in if Ministers were only firm. Warburton and O'Connell concurred in rejecting his guarantee, which no one ventured to endorse. The new clause regarding justices of the peace was consequently admitted; that for a redistribution of wards refused. The angry controversy was thus brought to an end; and the Melbourne Cabinet had the satisfaction of seeing this firstfruit of their legislative labour garnered in the storehouse of useful reforms before the prorogation. Very few statutes of our time have wrought so great and valuable a change in the practical government of the country. It originated undoubtedly in the Grey Cabinet, but as undoubtedly the credit of carrying it belongs to that of Melbourne. He was himself much elated at the result of his first legislative campaign.

Brougham had striven indefatigably to aid in support of the Corporation Bill. On every point of law or usage, ancient principle or modern mal-practice, he was ready to encounter the specious objections of Lyndhurst. Their well-matched skill of fence amused Holland; but it fretted and at last bored the Premier, who cared little for the cleverness displayed, and a great deal for the popular irritation it prolonged. When the struggle was over neither the champions nor the onlookers measured the result as he did. The imprudence of the Peers in wantonly staking their reputa-

tion and power on an issue which within a month they were forced to abandon, filled the minds of many with the notion that the days of the hereditary chamber were numbered, and that some organic change was imminent in that part of the Constitution. Pamphlets, leading articles, after-dinner speeches, sarcastic letters, and reviews of new editions of Roman history applicable to the time contributed to produce a state of surmise, if not of real feeling, that Government could not go on much longer without a reform of the Lords. The Radical press and many of the Radical members mistook the superficial symptoms of the time. Instead of returning to Ireland when the session closed O'Connell proceeded to the northern counties, and thence to Scotland, addressing everywhere vast multitudes on the political topics of the day. He offered to relinquish all further thoughts of repeal for the imperial purpose of abolishing the hereditary branch of the legislature, to which he ascribed the continuance of those grievances of which Ireland especially complained. Tumultuous applause greeted him everywhere, and he became more especially the target at which every shaft of Opposition was aimed. He replied in terms of unmeasured invective; vituperating by name several of his anonymous assailants. The din lasted for some weeks, and from sheer exhaustion ceased, leaving no tangible result of any kind. In the following November, however, Sir Francis Burdett wrote a letter to the managers of Brooks's Club, calling for his expulsion because he persisted in attacking men of honour, with whom he would not fight. His reply appeared on the third of December justifying his conduct. The Committee refused to interfere in a matter which they deemed beyond their cognizance, whereupon Sir Francis withdrew his name from the club. Brougham, Graham, and Stanley did the same. Many of the Whigs, though they deprecated O'Connell's violence of language, believed in the imminence of organic change; and, strange as it appears to us now, many ardent Tories shared in their anticipation. They could not be persuaded that the overthrow of a ministry of

resistance, followed by a coalition of the popular elements in Great Britain and Ireland, the self-imposed humiliation of the Lords in their legislative capacity and the permanent enfranchisement and organisation of elective municipalities in the cities and towns of England and Wales, could end in peace and loyalty. It was only a question of months or perhaps years, but, sooner or later, "the concern must go." Melbourne took a very different view. What might have happened had the Lords been mad enough to persist in following the advice of Lyndhurst rather than that of Peel, and thrown out the Corporation Bill, nobody can tell. But the Bill had been carried, not lost, which, in his common-sensical way of estimating affairs, made all the difference. He understood the country better than the Benthamites, who had proved long ago the power of the Lords to be illogical; or the rhetorical agitators, who believed that they could keep up the resentment of a money-making, comfort-loving, easy-going community, when the cause of quarrel was withdrawn. He had no apprehension for the stability of the House of Lords. The effect that seemed to him inevitable from the ten-pound parliamentary franchise and the household municipal suffrage taken together, was sectarian, not political:—

> You may not see all the consequences of this to-morrow; but you have given by law a permanent power in all the centres of industry and intelligence to the Dissenters which they never had before, and which they never could have had otherwise. They are the classes who will really gain by the change, not the mob or the theorists; every year their strength will be felt more and more at elections and their influence in legislation. Depend upon it, it is the Established Church, not the hereditary peerage, that has need to set its house in order.*

Forty years have come and gone since these fore-thoughtful words were spoken. And how have they been verified?

* In conversation with an intimate friend.

Mr. Warburton had carried some amendments in Brougham's Bill for regulating patents, against which its sensitive and excitable author appealed to the head of the Government.

MY DEAR M——

I have drawn up a memorandum for J. Russell and Rice. Anything more degrading for the Government than to let Wakley and Co. beat them and the Tories together on such a question I cannot conceive. All I have seen, except those two, were all clear and strong. But the Government being afraid to take a part keeps them in suspense. One word from the Government settles the case, and if they give not that the clause is lost. I shall explain again the whole matter—at least I shall not be to blame for its loss. This is, really, an occasion on which a Liberal Government might gain some credit, instead of sharing with the lowest of mankind the discredit of spoiling an excellent measure. It is on to-morrow (Friday).

Yours, H. B.

Melbourne inclosed his note with the commentary:—

MY DEAR JOHN ——

I send you a memorandum of Brougham's upon the alterations which have been made by Warburton. I believe in his Patents Bill. He is extremely eager upon the subject, and in my opinion he is quite in the right. The more matters of this kind can be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the House of Lords, the better; and this is a step. I suppose it is impossible to persuade Warburton to give way; but it would be a good thing if you could do so.

Yours faithfully,

MELBOURNE.*

The member for Bridport would not yield to the importunities of the Whip, and the House being nearly empty, the question was suffered to stand over till the Monday

* To Lord John Russell, September 4th, 1835.

following. Mr. Tooke, himself a great authority in economics, then moved to leave out his amendment; and prevailed by twenty-five votes to twenty-three.

With a view to the legislative redress of grievances of which Nonconformists complained, the First Minister addressed an official note to the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Poulett Thomson, Hobhouse, and Howick, requesting them "to undertake the consideration of all the questions relating to the Dissenters, and to frame measures for the consideration of the Cabinet."* The fruit of their deliberations was visible in due time. Two charters were granted—one to constitute the University of London, hitherto so called, "University College, London," for "the general advancement of literature and science, by affording to young men adequate opportunities of obtaining literary and scientific education at a moderate expense," the other charter creating the "University of London."†

Previous to the introduction of the measure giving power to the London University to grant degrees it was submitted to Melbourne for approval. A memorandum on the subject is preserved in his own writing:

It seems to me well conceived, but I would omit the words which I have underlined in the preamble and in the first enacting clause. There is no need to point so precisely to its being a measure for the benefit of the Dissenters. All persons will be entitled to take advantage of it under the words as they will stand after the omission.

Of many topics of administrative interest, few were more celebrated in their day than the special mission sent to negotiate better terms of commercial intercourse with France, in the success of which he had little faith.

My dear Rice,

The renewal of Bowring's mission has never been mentioned

* Private and confidential circular, September 8th, 1835.

† November 28th, 1836.

to me, and I entertain the strongest objection to it. In the first place I do not believe that it is in the least degree calculated to effect its object, but in addition to this I conceive it to be wrong in principle. How should we like a French political economist sent among us to preach in our commercial and manufacturing towns, that our Corn Laws were erroneous, and ought to be repealed. I know the whole proceeding to have given the greatest offence and uneasiness to the Government of France, and especially to the King; and I should be very sorry to see it revived under my administration.*

Yours faithfully,

MELBOURNE.

A new specimen of H. B's rare aptitude in turning to account his skill as an animal painter, in illustrating the passing events of the day, was that in which he chose for his subject the popular feat performed in the menagerie at Exeter Change, which every schoolboy home for the holidays saw with delight, and every nervous old gentlemen witnessed with a shudder. The drawing depicted a lion in fine condition, with whose massive features those of O'Connell were subtly interlimned, good-naturedly suffering Lord John to put his head into his mouth as Van Amburg was wont to do. When half way in, the keeper, whose position disabled him from seeing what was going on, was supposed to ask: "Does he wag his tail?" † It was simply impossible for any one in England in October 1835 to see the caricature and forget it; and in this way it may be truly said, that the pencil of H. B. exercised over the minds of men a power thoroughly self-constituted and more absolutely irresponsible than the sceptre of any despot.

Melbourne's time was divided during the autumn between Downing Street and Panshanger, which was to him a second home, and in every respect a more cheerful one than

* From Panshanger, September 20th, 1835.

† No. 413, October 7th, 1835.

Brocket, encompassed as it was with painful recollections. To the brightest sunshine there he would indeed frequently exclaim:

> "Thou bringest the light of pleasures fled,
> And hopes long dead."

But from sad memories he turned to official occupations, and seldom allowed more than a day or two to pass without a visit to town, then he would return to Hertfordshire with his carriage full of red boxes of papers, and spend the mornings in his own room, busy with his correspondence. But his diversified claims were not to be kept down, and towards the end of October he began to wish that Spring Rice were back again, to talk him out of misgivings, and clear up financial puzzles, and take, as he was ever ready to do, any amount of work off his hands. In an anxious, but kindly mood he wrote:—

> It is rather hard upon you who stayed so much longer in town than the rest, that there is so much to do and think of, that I wish you could be back on the 12th of November, or as near it as possible. The Church Commission is to meet, I think, on the 14th, and it will be necessary to make an effort to bring that business to a conclusion, and have the result prepared by the meeting of Parliament.—Adieu. *

His air of indifference and idleness created a general impression that his habit of official life was to take things easy, caring little and knowing less of the reasons that swayed the disposal of patronage. Nothing could be more unlike the truth; from the gift of a mitre or a garter to the promotion of a secretary of embassy, or the choice among candidates for legal appointments in Ireland, he took pains to scan the motives of each recommendation and to weigh the reasons by which each preference ought to be decided.

* From Downing Street, October 28th, 1835.

He was of course sometimes mistaken, and sometimes deceived; but he certainly fell into few errors of selection from want of care. Here are a few instances just as they come in the correspondence of a single week:—

I have a great regard for Lord H., and consider him to have supported us very steadily and handsomely. When I wrote to him I did not know how Palmerston felt inclined towards his son, and therefore answered in the general terms, which you have seen. I found Palmerston not very favourably disposed, and to say the truth, his matrimonial alliance which is an insuperable objection at Paris, would not be very convenient in any other place. It might not be injurious in reality, although that is doubtful, but the impression would be very bad. I think you had better write exactly as you propose. Lord H. is certainly very sore and much annoyed at present; but I think upon reflection he must admit the fairness of the reasoning. Do not mention what I said to you about Lansdowne, as he is anxious that his claim should be postponed for the present. Our Scotch friends are desirous that it should be given to the Duke of Hamilton; in order to take the chance of securing his influence, and it appears to me that it would be the best course."*

I forgot before you left London to speak to you upon the subject of the Second Remembrancer of the Irish Court of Exchequer which I had intended to do. I find considerable objection made to Mr. Howley. They state that he is not acquainted with equity, that he is not a man of much ability, and that his appointment, upon the whole, would not be creditable to the Government or satisfactory to the public. The list of candidates which has been given in by the Attorney-General at the request of the Lord Lieutenant, with what appears to me to be very fair comments upon each name, is as follows,—I presume that the order in which they are placed shows his preference:

* Panshanger, October 3rd, 1835.

D. R. Pigott, C. Tickle, J. Moody, S. Hanna, H. Stock, W. E. Hudson, P. Fogarty, J. Howley. Of these, three, viz., Pigott, Fogarty and Howley, are Roman Catholics, the rest Protestants. Mr. Pigott is, I understand, a personal friend of Mr. O'Connell's, and though this consideration should not be suffered to overbalance real claims, it appears to me to be an objection at the present moment, and perhaps there is something in the Chief Remembrancer being also a Roman Catholic, although I should be desirous if possible of avoiding to introduce the established course of alternate appointments, which I see fast approaching, and which perhaps is inevitable. Of the rest Mr. Tickle seems well qualified, by standing at the bar and professional eminence, but his political opinions do not appear to be quite ascertained. Mr. Moody and Mr. Hudson are well spoken of generally, but they are common lawyers. Mr. Hanna and Mr. Stock are said to be good general lawyers, fit for any situation in their profession, and of unpretendingly liberal principles. You can consider this subject with some inquiry in Dublin; talk with Mulgrave, and let me know what you think upon the subject. I have written this morning to Mulgrave upon the question of the course to be pursued in the collection of tithe, and have advised him to consult fully with you upon it as you pass through Dublin. I agree entirely with what you said in our last conversation, as to the general principle upon which we must act. I foresee difficulties which may arise, but these must be dealt with as they arise according to circumstances. He has sent me the proposed draft of a letter in answer to applications for office, to which draft in its present form I feel considerable objection. It goes too much into detail and gives too many reasons. He will show you my letter and the shorter form which I have suggested.*

O'Loghlen behaved well in thus placing Pigott's name

* October 5th, 1835.

at the head of the list; for, in the year before, his acceptance of the Solicitor-Generalship under Blackburn was condemned by many independent Liberals, and he was under the belief that certain letters in the *Evening Post*, of remonstrance if not of rebuke, were from Pigott's pen. Be that as it may, Pigott declined, wisely, as it proved, for his ultimate professional distinction, the offer of the Second Remembrancership; and after some further consultation it was conferred at the recommendation of the Chancellor, on Mr. Acheson Lyle, with the approval of the bar and the entire satisfaction of suitors in the Exchequer.

The glare of prosperity dazzled most eyes; and in 1835, though the budget remitted taxation on a few minor articles of consumption only, it was received with general satisfaction, as indicating frugality in expenditure, and readiness to apply any available surplus in just relief from taxation. Next to Sir R. Peel, the highest financial authority in Opposition was Lord Ashburton, who wrote:—

> With the exception of the question of a sinking fund and of the most profitable mode of employing it, I find nothing to which the most critical fault-finder could object. I am convinced that the three kingdoms are at this moment in a condition fully to justify the assumption of the nickname given to one of your predecessors, Lord Ripon, and further that the prosperity has every appearance of being sound and lasting, so long at least as peace abroad and quiet and confidence at home can be maintained. It will not be easy to resist, under these circumstances, the attacks of those who seek easy and dishonest popularity by attacking your surplus or finding one for you. To trust the highest year as the average one, is an obvious abandonment of common prudence, and I really believe the safest course would be to build handsome Houses of Parliament, improve the navigation of the channel, and indulge a little in magnificence instead of yielding to the romance of the tax on knowledge or help to the squires.

It is true that these poor squires and their tenants are an awful exception to the state of prosperity I am speaking of; but who can point out any reasonable chance of remedy from any measure discussed at the agricultural dinners? They are entitled to relief if the power of giving it can be proved, but the subject must be treated and disposed of by common sense. The poor law is approved by intelligent farmers. If I were to name the most desirable object of relief from an overflowing treasury, it would be in the article of postage. This tax presses heavily on the industry of the country, and checks that which is most essential to its life—all communication. I received the other day a letter from America of no remarkable bulk, charged with a postage of thirteen shillings. As such an event does not now often happen to me, the charge was of little consequence, but it made me reflect, how much useful industry and profitable business must be checked by such a charge. Free intercourse and correspondence begets business, and you might perhaps with less injury tax words spoken on the Royal Exchange than words interchanged by letter with all parts of the world. The relief would be to all classes of the educated community. I wish your Radical philosophers would be content to consider this tax as one upon knowledge, which it truly is, as well as upon industry. A reduction of postage one-half would be to my mind the most rational and substantial relief that could be given; and further, it is clear that the Post Office revenue would spring under the change.*

The Melbourne Government acted in the spirit of this wise prompting as soon as they were able; and Sir Robert Peel and Lord Ashburton's other political friends denounced them as reckless, improvident, and time-serving. What is the verdict of experience on cheapened postage?

* From The Grange, November 10th, 1835.

CHAPTER VI.

ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES.

Pepys made Chancellor—Resentment of Brougham—Supporters in the Peers—Bishop' Longley—Dr. Arnold—Norton v. Melbourne —Reply to Lyndhurst.

Possessed at last of real power, he resolved steadfastly to try how far it was possible to allay discontent, and to retrieve the consequences of long misrule in Ireland, by a policy of equal justice. Remedial legislation might, nay must be, tardy. With a resentful Court, an outnumbering majority in the Peers, and an Opposition in the Commons formidable in numerical strength and rhetorical ability, it would not be easy to carry any great measure of change, and impossible to carry many of importance. But while the experiment was making, and its issue was still doubtful, the great majority of the community might be made to feel the benefit and protection of equal laws. He would take the poison out of the cup, the poison of partiality, inveterate, intolerable, ineffable, that perverted and corrupted the nation's soul. Not now for the first time, as the glib tongue of his assailants averred, was he impressed with the conviction that the administration of justice, which had grown up under the sad necessities of garrison rule, and which still survived in pernicious vigour its statutable abolition, was one under which no intelligent enfranchised and newspaper-reading community could be expected to be content and loyal. His letters from Ireland, when Chief Secretary, are full of earnest and impatient solicitude

on this head. After all that had been done in the way of amelioration by Wellesley and Plunket, he urged vehemently the need of more comprehensive and systematic means of purifying the administration of justice:

> What is to be done about the sheriffs? The non-execution of the process of the law, is the one great evil of the country. How can the lower orders be expected to observe the law, when the higher set the example both of resisting and corrupting it.*

The new Under-Secretary had not been many weeks in office before the inefficient state of the police, on whom, in ordinary circumstances, the preservation of order depended, caused him anxiety and concern. He found the condition of the Dublin constabulary "most wretched." "It consisted of a small number of day police, having an establishment of peace officers somewhat similar to the old establishment of the metropolitan police officers, and a considerable number of watchmen—decrepit, worn-out old men. For the purpose of a day police these were absolutely insufficient; in fact, it was impossible to produce them. In August 1835, there was a public meeting in the Coburg Gardens, and it became his duty to consult with Alderman Darley (the senior magistrate) as to the means of preserving the peace. The small body of day police, he said, were totally inadequate to the occasion. The Under-Secretary suggested that he should bring out his watchmen. He said, "Oh, that will not do; they will excite so much the ridicule of the people that there would be a risk of their very appearance creating a disturbance. It will not do to show them in daylight."† A bill organizing a police force for the Irish metropolis was forthwith prepared, and in the Commons met with no obstruction; but to the Peers it savoured of rash innovation, and the scandal was consequently not removed till two years later.

* Letter from W. Lamb, November 18th, 1827.

† Evidence of Mr. Drummond before the Lords' Committee, 1839.

Another novelty introduced by the new executive, unwisely, in the opinion of many of the subordinates whom they found in office, and quixotically, in the judgment of not a few politicians of the old school, was the systematic prevention of the faction fights, which had long been the reproach of several parts of the country. Though liable to be turned by accident or design to political or sectarian account, these strange combats of the peasantry among themselves had seldom any specific cause intelligible out of the locality they disturbed. They were not mere ebullitions of anger at casual offence, or a sudden resentment against some fancied wrong, but engagements fought with a fluctuating fortune of warfare, waged from sire to son, between tribes, or clans, whose individual members bore no malice to their neighbours in the intervals of truce, frequently of prolonged duration. It was a fixed idea in the heads of many of the gentry, that the practice, however unmeaning and uncivilized, answered a good purpose, by letting out a good deal of hot blood in a way that did no harm to property or the state. This was not merely an after-dinner sentiment, uttered with a laugh, or accompanied with a shrug. When the constabulary had notice that the Black-hens were about to attack the Magpies on the morrow, they "remembered to forget" to occupy the ground; and when the Three-year-olds were marshalling in strength against the Four-year-olds, the preservers of the peace were usually out of the way, not from any remissness on the part of the men, but in obedience to commands from their officers. Sir John Harvey, a provincial inspector of experience and repute, seriously remonstrated with Mr. Drummond when ordered to interpose a sufficient force to prevent these sanguinary encounters. He said it had never been done in his time, and that it would probably lead to very mischievous results if the combative dispositions of the most active and able-bodied of the peasantry were diverted from assailing one another's heads to those of the better orders of society. A quiet but firm reiteration of the resolve come to by Government terminated

the anarchic policy dignified with the misnomer of prudent non-intervention. At first the belligerents refused to believe that interference with their time-honoured freedom of fight could be seriously intended. Fierce altercations arose, and occasionally a *fracas* took place with the police; but the Government were in earnest, the people soon came to understand that they were, and faction fights are now as rare in Ireland, as cock fights are in England.

The Garter, vacant by Lord Chatham's death, was offered to Lansdowne, but declined by him from a wish that it might be disposed of in some other way more likely to serve the interest of the administration. The Premier warmly acknowledged the considerate unselfishness of his colleague, and in accordance with his advice, and that of Lord Rosebery, conferred it on the Duke of Hamilton.*

Before the reassembling of the Cabinet in November, its chief conferred, by letter, with the Lord President and the Home Secretary upon the weightier topics that must engage its attention :—

Many thanks for your letter. I am afraid that, for the reasons which you state, the question of the Irish Church can neither be avoided or postponed. It must, therefore, be attempted to be solved. I have had from John a short summary of his views, but I cannot say that I thoroughly comprehend them. I am glad to hear the account which you give of the state of the country. It concurs with every other which I receive. The improvement of Ireland is reported to be manifest in everything: the breed of cattle, the greater comfort of the cabins, the clothing and general condition of the people. I am going to Lichfield's on Saturday to shoot for five or six days; but mean to be back to dine with the Lord Mayor on the 9th of November. If you could come too, it would be as well; but I suppose you will not, at any rate, be later than the 12th. I am rather sorry you did not mention about the Duke of

* Letter from Panshanger, October 3rd, 1835.

Hamilton. I said nothing very explicit to him. His letter expressed the strongest feelings of satisfaction, and in my reply I expressed my pleasure at finding it was so agreeable to his feelings to receive the honour at our hands. The Duke of Cleveland, from a letter which he wrote me will be offended, but as he has no earthly right to be so, it is not to be regarded. I have no doubt that this matter is at the bottom of the Duke of Somerset's conduct. The Duke of Montrose is not expected to live long, or rather is daily expected to die. You cannot think how strongly I was pressed for Scotland, that the Ribband should be given, as it has been, and of what importance it was represented to be to our interest in that country.*

Some weeks later he again pressed it on his friend, the opportunity arising upon the death of the Duke of Beaufort: —

I write, because if I called there might be a chance of my missing you, to say that in my opinion, and after some consideration, it will be most advantageous for the Government that you should now accept the Blue Ribband. It will be highly acceptable to the King; I know it will be a proof of his good will, and being expected, it will give as little offence as can possibly be given to other claimants. If this accords with your own opinion, and your own feeling, the sooner the King's pleasure is taken the better.†

The Sovereign's assent was cordial:—

The King acknowledges the receipt of Viscount Melbourne's letter of yesterday, and after all that has passed on the subject of the disposal of vacant Blue Ribbands, it is almost unnecessary that his Majesty should assure him

* To Lord Lansdowne, October 29th, 1835, from Downing Street.

† Note from South Street, November 25th, 1835.

that he highly approves of his recommendation of the Marquis of Lansdowne for that which has become so by the death of the Duke of Beaufort.

The King said nothing to me on the subject at Brighton, but John Russell says that he thought His Majesty, in speaking to him, felt a little hurt at your not being there. We must have a report about the 23rd of this month, and, though it is an inconvenient time of the year, it would perhaps be as well if you could contrive to be there. You will see that the Ecclesiastical Commission has adjourned until the 13th of January, which I hope will not be bringing you to London sooner than you intend. We have had a most important question, and which would brook no delay, to determine about Spain, but I have not time to explain it to you now.*

The first serious difficulty of the Government arose from the discontent of suitors and practitioners in the Court of Chancery. The Commissioners having each enough to occupy him in his own court, neglected of necessity that in which they were required to sit together. Arrears accumulated; cases in part heard lay over without any visible prospect of being decided; costs exceeded all example; and public irritation increased every day at the palpable denial of justice. A pamphlet by Sir Edward Sugden, entitled, "What has become of the Great Seal?" kindled discontent into flame. On all sides mutterings of complaint were heard; the demand grew importunate for a Chancellor. Brougham heard it afar off, and was glad: the want of him at length was felt. Manifestly he was indispensable. Without him the public business could not go on. An ungrateful monarch might still grumble at the mention of his name; but the nation at large were calling for a Lord Keeper: who but he? Melbourne, nevertheless, was resolved not to reappoint him. Lord J. Russell and a majority of the Cabinet were for raising Pepys to the chief seat in Equity,

* From Downing Street, December 7th, 1835.

and making Bickersteth Master of the Rolls; Lord Howick and other members of the Government were impressed with the notion that Bickersteth would prove a great debater, and that he was in fact the only match for Brougham, whose wrath when palpably thrown over, all anticipated. Hobhouse reported a scene which he had witnessed before the Privy Council, where Bickersteth had completely put down the rude interruptions of Brougham, and from this example he contended great things were to be inferred. Curiously enough the King evinced likewise a decided predilection for the philosophic Radical, from his having read a brief but logical reply of his, to one of the ex-Chancellor's flighty speeches at the London University.* Melbourne, on the other hand, thought him too fond of theoretic speculation for a supreme adviser in legislation; and objected that one wholly untried in public life could hardly be expected to hold his own with the rivals and antagonists he would have to cope with in the Lords. Bickersteth is said to have let fall a foolish observation upon some hint of this misgiving, declaring with an over-confident air that *he* did not consider Brougham a very formidable antagonist. "I do," was Melbourne's comment; and he thought less than ever of the Utilitarian's chances in the war of words. His prescient sagacity was justified sooner and more signally than he could have anticipated. He spent the Christmas holidays at Panshanger, whence he wrote confidentially to Spring Rice:

> I had the satisfaction to receive a letter from the Solicitor-General (Sir J. Rolfe) expressing his entire approbation of the equity arrangement, and his conviction that it will be most agreeable both to the bar and to the suitors. The Attorney-General (Sir J. Campbell) I am sorry to say, takes it very ill, and I fear will not be reconciled to it. The King approves it highly.†

Melbourne still hesitated. His good-nature shrank from

* Hobhouse's 'Recollections.'

† January 2nd, 1836.

irreparably wounding the self-esteem of one who had long been an intimate and a colleague, and of whom personally he had nothing to complain. Possibly too he was conscious that in some degree his determination to shut out Brougham from the Cabinet was influenced by the apprehension that once readmitted the indefatigable drawer of bills and maker of speeches would play the part of master, if he were not really so. A perpetual scrambling and jostling for ascendency with any man was repugnant to Melbourne's nature; but with a man like Brougham it would make life intolerable. The discussion was renewed from week to week, and the determination still deferred: On the 10th of January he wrote:—

My difficulties and embarrassments about the Great Seal are considerable. At this you will not be surprised, and I will therefore proceed to state them. Pepys will accept the Great Seal, under the distinct understanding that the separation of the office is to be attempted, and that upon its being carried he is to be appointed permanent judge in equity. He does this, however, with reluctance, feeling the great risk which he runs, and would rather that the Commission should continue, that he should be made a Peer, and in his present capacity of First Commissioner of the Great Seal and Master of the Rolls should bring forward the measure for the reformation of the Equity Courts. The objections to this suggested mode of proceeding are, by all whom I have consulted, declared to be insuperable. Bickersteth is very willing to undertake the judicial duties of Master of the Rolls, but partly from sensitiveness partly from principle, does not like to engage in Parliament. The House of Commons I understand him to decline altogether, and on the score of insufficient fortune he is very reluctant to be raised to the peerage. Campbell, after much discussion of the subject, which, I must say, considering how deeply his interests are involved, and his feelings touched, he has carried on

with great fairness and good temper, has this morning sent to me his final determination, which is that he cannot submit to be passed over and must resign, if our arrangement is carried into effect. You know the difficulties there would be in filling up Campbell's situation. Rolfe would suit it, if he could venture to vacate, and Wylde, a man certainly of great abilities, would be willing, I doubt not, to accept the office of Solicitor-General. Now does the certainty of Campbell's resignation with Bickersteth's indisposition to give Parliamentary assistance make such a difference in the circumstances under which the Cabinet decided before as to make you think that that determination should be changed? My present intention is to call together those who are in town to-morrow and to take their opinion upon it; I hope to receive yours as soon as possible. I have mentioned Pepys and Bickersteth to the King, who highly approves of them both, and would of course be disquieted with any change of intention.*

At last public discontent overbore indecision. It was urged that Pepys should be raised to the Woolsack and that Bicker steth should be made a peer and Master of the Rolls. It was further resolved that a bill should be brought in to divide the political from the judicial functions of the Chancellor with the intention of conferring the former half of the office on Sir J. Campbell. Lord Langdale's first speech delivered in support of this measure was deemed so maladroit as to be fatal to its further progress. The sanguine hopes of his friends evaporated, and though he made an excellent judge he never attained to any eminence in debate. It was otherwise with his unpretentious rival. For some time he was content to get through his work methodically, never saying much, and generally looking rather hot and uncomfortable when called to account for what he was doing, but usually able to show that he was in the right. Pepys became an eminent judge, and after a

* To Lord Lansdowne, January 10th, 1836.

time an invaluable addition to the strength of the Administration. In looks and habits, as in intellectual gifts, he was a strange contrast to his volatile and versatile predecessor. Holland said they had exchanged the rarest bundle of rockets in the world, for a mortar that went off seldom but never missed fire. Plunket asked the Premier how he got on with the new Chancellor: "Oh! capitally; I'm like a man who has broken for good with a termagant mistress, and married the best of cooks."

Brougham was beside himself with rage. To the last he had clung to hopes of restoration to his former dignity and dreams of more than former power. Now that these were suddenly dissipated he said he had been deceived. His vanity would not allow him to admit that all the high anticipations of glory to come, in which he had boastfully indulged, were without foundation. Few clever men have the courage to confess their being duped; fewer still that they have been self-befooled. And Brougham's vanity was not only that of encyclopædic knowledge and of omnipotence in exposition, but of being the keenest and shrewdest man of the world. There was nothing for it therefore but to fasten the shame of the deception round another's neck. On the memorable night when Melbourne had come to him to tell him he was first minister, and to say how much he regretted that he could not tell him who was to be Chancellor, his indignation was sacrificed to friendship and his self-love to zeal for his party. He had listened to plausible and pleasant words of deprecation, implying, as he took them, the acknowledgment of his paramount importance and unique position among public men. We shall never know what really passed at that curious interview; how far Melbourne may have been tempted by old feelings of kindness, or by new instincts of prudence, to play with words or temporise with the emotions not far removed in that first frenzy of chagrin, from lunacy: nor shall we ever know what questions and cross-questions were put and parried, or frankly met, and in what terms. The correspondence which subsequently took place upon the

occurrence of the final breach doubtless contained all arrayed in the most florid garb of reproach and recrimination. But when a decade had gone by, and the pulse of ambition had grown cold, Melbourne directed that Brougham's letters should be restored to him, and he consented ultimately to both his and Melbourne's being committed to the flames. The collector of gossip will of course regret the loss; but those who honour genius will rejoice to find an instance, not too common, of such mutuality of renunciation and disposition to forget injuries. For it cannot be doubted that in their open quarrel each said of the other hard things, which, for the fame of both and the good of the country they served, it is better should not be chronicled in the history of their time. Be this as it may we know that when the tidings came to the official exile in Westmoreland that the inarticulate equity drafts-man whom he had made Solicitor-General, and then Master of the Rolls, was in his stead to occupy the Woolsack, Brougham was completely stunned. Then came the revulsion of energy and anger almost irrestrainable. His reappearance in the House of Lords was gaped for by all who feared or hoped for mischief; but he did not reappear. Tantalising letters wondering at his absence, and provoking articles dwelling with real or affected concern, on his premature extinction wound him up at last to such a pitch of excitement that his intimate friends grew uneasy, and not without difficulty, frightened him by hints about his health to prolong his stay at home. Campbell, after all, did not resign, being mollified with a peerage conferred upon his wife; and for five years more he continued to fill the situation of Attorney-General. Brougham diligently laboured to convince him that he had been as ill-used as himself: for, as he always said, "Whigs were deceivers ever." But Sir John was steadfast, and would not be beguiled.

Mr. Spencer Perceval, who believed in the revelation of the Unknown Tongues, undertook a mission to the leading members of the Government, who it was thought desirable to rouse from their undiscernment of the signs of the times.

Other ministers received him in wondering silence and courteously bowed him out. At South Street he met with a different reception. Always curious about religious belief, whatever shape it assumed, Melbourne plunged at once into discussion with the Apostle, wanted to know his credentials, and how he could venture to deliver a message from heaven the language of which he did not understand. For himself he would be only too glad if some one would show him the clear and true light, for he had a very poor opinion of the illuminating power of the tapers then most in vogue. His monitor did not heed the half casuistic drift of his observations; and getting tired of a controversy which came to nothing, he brought it to an end by saying gravely, "Your proper course, I think, will be to go at the Bishops." The Apostle told him in confidence that this duty had already been provided for, and that Henry Drummond was, he believed, gone that very day to Lambeth. What came of his wrestling with Archbishop Howley, Melbourne never could learn; but he delighted to tell how a well-known clergyman met Mr. Drummond at Nice, who told him he was much favoured there by communications from the spirits. Underneath a house overlooking the sea there were real or artificial caverns, and in front of these when he walked after dark, he used to hear distinctly voices that could not be mistaken. When asked what did they say? he replied that the supernatural language could not be rendered in the vulgar tongue; but, that the cadences were most impressive, a sweet low whirr, and then a moaning sound, as of lamentation. His orthodox acquaintance asked if he was certain that bats never frequented these caves; a suggestion which he put aside firmly, yet with a certain tone of pity for the reverend unbeliever.

As the session approached, the First Minister began to take counsel regarding the Royal Speech.

Minto has just sent me your note. The meeting of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners has been postponed until the

20th. I know nothing of this except by circular. I suppose the reason is that they have not been able to prepare the Reports. I do not think that it would be prudent to postpone upon this account the meeting of the Cabinet. We have much to digest and decide, and I should wish the Speech to have a very mature consideration. I would not, therefore, have Minto put off his dinner, and I hope you will be able, if not to be at it, at least to come soon after it.*

In preparing the Speech from the Throne he was unwilling to put too high the estimate of national prosperity. The revenue had exceeded expectation, and commerce was more than usually active; but its condition was in some respects exceptional; and in many agricultural districts prices and wages continued to be very low:

I send you a rough sketch of what it may be proper to say upon the estimates. The increase of the local rates and the state of the land are ticklish points. I do not like to say much more than I have respecting prosperity. There are temporary circumstances which increase it in the present year. The tea trade is one, the loan another. Depend upon it, whatever the economists may say, the borrowing a large sum of money, and paying it off again, even slowly and in a disadvantageous manner, has a tendency to give a temporary appearance of increased revenues, &c., &c.†

Parliament met on the 4th of February: Lord Stanley taking his seat for the first time on the front Opposition bench, nearer the Speaker's chair than Sir Robert Peel; and to the surprise of his old friends, with whom of late he had been intimate as formerly, making a speech severing himself more than ever from them. On the amendment to the Address they prevailed, notwithstanding some losses at elections during the recess, by 41,—more by ten than they had

* To Lord Lansdowne, January 7th, 1836.

† To the Chancellor of the Exchequer, January 22nd, 1836.

expected. This success was followed by a majority of 64 on the second reading of the Irish Corporation Bill, the Conservatives numbering but 240 votes. Public opinion seemed to ratify this decision, and it is inexplicable why it should not have been acquiesced in as a matter of policy by the chiefs of Opposition. Democratic agitation was falling asleep; the "No Popery" cry was growing hoarse and dull, and no threatenings of foreign trouble overhung the general prosperity. In the Peers the adherents of Ministers mustered strong. Lord Derby took his usual seat behind them. Brougham's place was vacant. Lord Cottenham took the oaths as a Peer and his seat on the Woolsack. The Duke of Richmond was among the occupants of the cross benches. Lord Grey did not attend; neither did Lord Spencer. Though greatly outnumbered, the Whig party in the Upper House represented obviously far more green acres and much more old blood than their opponents, many of whose patents of nobility dated from the two previous reigns. Melbourne's philosophy did not forbid his enjoyment of this reflection. Himself one of "the New Men," it filled him, he owned, with no little satisfaction to be the accepted leader of Norfolk, Leinster, Sutherland, Dacre, Shrewsbury, Stourton, Saye and Sele, Derby, Bute, Huntingdon, Bedford, Clanricarde, Somerset, Anglesea, Devonshire, Suffolk, Petre, Arundel, Darnley, Meath, Cork, Belhaven, Fitzwilliam, Charlemont, Queensberry, Scarborough, Sefton, Essex, Townshend, Carlisle, Grafton, Clifford, Leeds, Breadalbane, Kinnaird,—the patents of whose ennoblement were as tracks along the highways of power, from the Conquest to the Revolution.

In the Commons Government had just gained likewise an adherent whose moral worth was greater even than his distinguished rank — the ex-Governor General of India. Some found fault with Lord W. Bentinck's address to the electors of Glasgow, in which he promised to vote for household suffrage and the ballot. "He was the first man of high rank and station who had publicly professed

ultra-Radical opinions." His angry relative goes on to tell how his success in life had been greater than his deserts, as he was "not right-headed," and had committed some great blunder or other in every public situation in which he was placed; but he was simple in his habits, popular in his manners, liberal in his opinions, and magnificently hospitable in his mode of life. These qualities were enough to ensure popularity."* By way of set-off against this, he adds Macaulay's well-known inscription for the column erected at Calcutta to commemorate Lord William's Government of India, for which though designated by Mr. Canning, he was eventually appointed by the Duke of Wellington. A week later Greville notes with satisfaction Poulett Thomson's abuse of the address at Glasgow, which he termed "truckling and disgraceful;" and then, by way of balancing the account of blame, he calls the President of the Board of Trade the greatest of coxcombs, who seriously pretended that he had originally taken office to oblige the Government, because Lord Althorp refused to go on without him.†

Early in the session Mr. Hume, as chairman of the committee on Orange Lodges, moved an address to the Crown, founded on its report against officers in the army or navy being permitted to belong to a confederacy which, it had been shown, might be perverted to dangerous and illegal objects. Lord J. Russell won the unanimous assent of the House by his statesman-like manner of dealing with a very difficult subject. Lord Stanley forgot their recent feud in generous praise of his old colleague, and Sir Robert Peel advised the Orangemen to bow to the will of Parliament and dissolve their organisation. But the blow came from the Whigs, and was not soon forgiven in Ulster.

Sir Henry Parnell though he had not kept his seat for Queen's County, had been included in the Administration. Old ties of friendship and confidence bound many of its leading members to him; and when he asked that Dr.

* Greville's Journal, vol. iii. p. 339. † Ibid. p. 330.

Longley, the Master of Harrow, who was his relative by marriage, should receive some appropriate recognition of his eminent services and attainments, Melbourne expressing "the high opinion which, from general report as well as from the testimony of those whose judgment he respected, he had formed of his character, literary acquirements, and general qualifications, told the Paymaster-General that he would seize the earliest opportunity of acting upon the opinion he had conceived." The contemplated translation of the Bishop of Hereford presented a fitting opportunity, he thought, of "proving the sincerity of these professions as well as his friendship for Sir Henry by the offer of that See."* While gratefully accepting the offer, Dr. Longley felt it his duty to apprize the minister that, "though anxious to promote church reform, and longing to see the Church cleared of those imperfections under which he lamented to see her labouring, there were some questions connected with the Irish Church on which he should be unable to support the Government in the House of Lords; and should this circumstance prove an insuperable obstacle to his appointment, however much he might regret the issue, it would not in the least degree diminish his feelings of gratitude and respect." † Melbourne at once replied that he respected very much the spirit of candour which animated him. He had made the offer under the belief derived from general impression as well as from the assurances of his relative, that the Doctor's opinions "were of a liberal character, particularly with respect to the reformation of the Church, and that he was, upon the whole, disposed to support the existing Government." This was all that could be required of any man. It never could be his intention to tie down opinion upon particular measures, and, therefore, the intimation regarding the bill respecting the Irish Church would make no difference in his determination." ‡ Difficulties arose from the reluctance of the Bishop of Hereford to be transferred to Chichester, and in June

* Dr. Longley's Correspondence, MS., February 28th, 1836.

† Idem, February 29th, 1836. ‡ Idem, February 29th, 1836.

the new See of Ripon was conferred on the Master of Harrow.

A strong desire existed among the friends whose judgment of character had most weight with him, that Dr. Arnold should be placed on the episcopal bench. He was the personal friend of the Lord President, Archbishop Whately, Mr. Senior, Mr. Justice Coleridge, and many others. His services to education were pre-eminent, and it was truly said that no man's promotion would have given so much pleasure to the best of the young men then coming into life. Learned, eloquent, tolerant, and fearless, he seemed to be in every way marked out as the fitting object of selection by a Liberal minister. Repeatedly the question was asked why he was not appointed; and no answer was publicly given, that can be called satisfactory. Melbourne had read more than one of his theological writings, which he thought excellent; and individually he inclined to the opinions regarding church property in Ireland, for which the master of Rugby had been most called in question. He was not given to affect squeamishness about offending the prejudices of the party opposed to him, and he knew that Lord Stanley did not hesitate to place his own son under Dr. Arnold's care; why then did he refuse to promote him? When asked by Eden, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, he replied, banteringly, "What have Tory churchmen ever done for me that I should make them a present of such a handle against my government?" And there cannot be a doubt that he believed that to make Arnold a bishop would have cost the administration very dear.

Dr. Hampden's appointment to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, excited some alarm among the clergy, by reason of his supposed leanings to latitudinarianism in matters of belief. The two archbishops sought an interview with the Premier to expostulate. He assured them there was no intention of selecting one who was not deemed orthodox, and for his own part, having read several of the new professor's writings, he had not discovered where he

strayed from the tenets of the Church. The prelates could not cite any passages in proof of their accusation, and the appointment having been actually made, he did not feel that he had any power to cancel it. Bishop Copleston and other orthodox divines had been previously consulted, and expressed no objection on theological grounds. But Dr. Hampden was a man cold and reserved in manner, and in politics a Whig.

In the beginning of April ministers were urged to impose some check on the continued outflow of gold from the Bank, from the fear of a panic suddenly supervening upon the great expansion of trade, and unprecedented extent of joint stock speculation. In reply to a communication of the utmost gravity from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the first Lord of the Treasury wrote :—

The state of the circulating medium is a most delicate and difficult question. I have long shared in the apprehensions expressed in the letters which you have sent to me. I think it is hardly possible that the present rise of prices, and consequent prosperity is all sound, though there are some who contend that it is so. If the bank holds its hand now, there will probably be considerable revulsion and ruin, though less than at a future period; but we shall have to bear the whole blame of being the authors of the national distress, and many will say that we have brought it about quite wantonly and unnecessarily. However, I think, upon the whole, the letter which you propose to write to the governor is right, but I would rather that it stood "disposed to restrict the system of loans and advances" than as it does, "not disposed to continue," which seems to point to a sudden and general suspension of all accommodation. You will, of course, see the Governor, and consult with him on the exact line to be pursued. I do not feel myself sufficiently conversant with facts and details to give more than a general opinion, but this I know, that of all things, sudden and

extensive results are to be avoided, and these are sure to be produced by great and hasty alterations of system. Loss and insolvency are nothing if spread over a sufficient period of time; on the contrary, general solvency is of little avail if there is an immediate and present stoppage.*

The budget of 1836 brought the ministry no small *éclat*. After payment of large sums to the West India planters, there remained a net surplus of £662,000, wherewith the duties on tea and newspaper stamps were greatly lightened. Lord Althorp's *ad valorem* rates, which assumed three clearly distinguishable qualities of tea, and which it was contended, formed a graduated scale of taxation, though just in aim had proved a failure. A uniform charge of 2*s.* 1*d.* a pound, though involving a temporary sacrifice, was now proposed as likely to yield eventually a larger revenue, and calculated to cheapen the coarser kinds of tea for the benefit of the humbler classes. The reduction of the tax on newspapers from 4*d.* to 1*d.* gave a new impulse, not only to the spread of political, but of industrial knowledge, and the interchange, in a degree wholly immeasurable, of social and of intellectual wants. The number of daily and weekly journals immediately rose from 397 to 458, and their total circulation was quadrupled. Recalling, as it is difficult to do fully and completely, the prejudices of the time, and the strength of the hindrances in the way of such a change, its proposal deserves to be regarded as one of the boldest and most beneficent which had yet been made to better the condition of the people. It was the first and heaviest blow dealt against illicit, immoral, and incendiary journalism, whose gains had depended on evading the excessive duty indiscriminately imposed on all daily and weekly publications. Other steps were necessary to complete the emancipation of the press from vexatious and frustrating control; but this, as it was the most difficult, was undoubtedly the greatest in that direction. Its praise, in a

* From Panshanger, April 8th, 1836.

word, may be summed up in this, that it went a long way to convert one of the greatest luxuries of the opulent classes into an ordinary comfort for all ranks of the community.

The municipal corporations in Scotland and England having been reformed, it became necessary to extend the same policy to those of Ireland. Abuses whimsical in variety, and indefensible in enormity, had been exposed by the commission of inquiry issued by the Grey Cabinet. The vice of local jobbing was dyed there with a deeper tinge of sectarianism and partisanship than in the other portions of the realm. The scandal was not denied, but Sir R. Peel and his friends would only consent to break up the worn-out machinery of urban rule on condition that nothing similar to that reconstructed in Great Britain should be substituted in its place. This was to found in Ireland a system of local government on the basis of national disability and religious exclusion. The controversy became a crucial test of party; and for the ensuing four years the reconstruction of civic corporations, or their obliteration to make room for officials appointed by the Crown, was made the dividing line between Conservatives and Liberals. In moving the second reading of the Irish Bill, on the 18th of April, 1836, Melbourne cited the report of the commissioners to show that these institutions were even more close and corrupt than in England. But he relied rather on their political and social faults, as a reason why they should be no longer tolerated:—

> He looked much more to the division and hostility, the enmity and animosity existing in the corporate towns of Ireland, than to any strong cases of abuse or malversation which had been adduced against particular bodies. Not only had these corporations excluded Roman Catholics, but Protestants whose opinions did not coincide with their own, and they not only introduced division between Protestants and Roman Catholics, but between Protestants themselves. It appeared to him that it was incumbent on the Legis-

> lature to make provision for admitting all classes of his Majesty's subjects in Ireland, of whatever religion they might be, to their due share in the management and government of their towns.

There was indeed no division on the second reading, but party feeling ran high, and the House of Lords, usually so calm and dignified, more than once became the scene of personal altercations and appeals to political and religious passion, as violent as in the highest fever of the struggle for Reform. The English Municipal Bill, though pertinaciously fought, had not upset the equanimity of the nobles, but when its counterpart for Ireland was in Committee, nearly the whole body of Opposition peers resolved on its mutilation, and upon Lyndhurst the task devolved of making out a case for this new measure of national outlawry. It is hard after forty years to realise the unreasoning and unreasonable fears of seditious borough rates, and popish water-pipes, which then bewildered experienced statesmen, and beguiled them into a contest wherein defeat was inevitable. For Lyndhurst's fame it was unfortunate that he should have undertaken to find apologies, if not arguments, in its defence; but it would be unjust to measure these historically without recalling the weight and worth of those whose mouthpiece, on the occasion, he consented to become. For one memorable indiscretion of phrase he must, indeed, be held individually accountable. In an elaborate, and otherwise circumspect, statement of the objections to the creation of popularly elective corporations in the towns and cities of Ireland, he was betrayed by some unaccountable impulse into saying that the great bulk of those on whom they were asked to confer the civic franchise, "were aliens in blood, language, and religion." How one so wary and habitually given to weigh with care every term and epithet, should have treble-shotted such a gun as this, without taking account of the recoil, is simply incomprehensible. From his Whig opponents

mild mutterings in protest came of course; but in the Upper House they were too feeble, both in number and debating ability, to resist the opposition to their bill, and Lyndhurst's motion to leave out all the reconstructed portions of it, was carried by a large majority. When, thus mutilated, it was returned to the Commons, the exasperation caused by the memorable taunt, found many eloquent voices. It had been, in the interval, the daily theme of bitter comment in the press, and its author, tardily convinced of its imprudence, had sought to attenuate its force by various explanatory observations. Something of the kind was likewise attempted on his behalf by friends in the Commons; but it would not do. Lord John said he had heard the unlucky words *ipsis auribus*, and O'Connell took care they should not be forgotten. Instead of renewing agitation for Repeal, he endeavoured to stimulate democratic feeling on both sides of the Channel against the hereditary principle in legislation; and how widely the belief had spread at the time that some organic change in that direction was at hand is illustrated by a letter from Macaulay to the friend with whom he had no reserve, and who, like himself, was wholly antipathetic to the Arch-Tribune:—

> There is, in my opinion, a question compared with which the Ballot and everything else sinks into insignificance, I mean the question of a hereditary peerage. I do not see how it is possible to avoid a final collision between the two Houses. The probability is that popular opinion will gather strength every year. In the meantime the Lords are becoming fiercer and more obstinate day by day. The young aristocrats who are destined to fill the seats of the present peers are even more bigoted than their fathers. The nobles and the people are not only at variance, but there is no tendency to approximation; nay, the separation is daily becoming more marked. The crisis is at hand. I do not expect it in 1837. It may not arrive in 1838 or 1839. But come it must, and in this generation. The

minds of men are fast becoming familiarized to the contemplation of changes, which, even when I left England, would have been regarded with dismay by a great majority of the middle classes. The institution of a hereditary aristocracy is one which it is not easy to defend in theory. But it had, till lately, a very strong hold on the feelings and imagination of the people. It is losing that hold. Opinions on this subject which, a few years ago, few people entertained and scarcely any ventured openly to express, are now constantly repeated in the most respectable newspapers, and have been very plainly hinted in Parliament without calling forth any strong disapprobation. These opinions, I firmly believe, will spread and strengthen. In a few years it will be absolutely necessary to take some extraordinary course for the purpose of bringing the two branches of the Legislature into harmony with each other. What course will it then be proper to take? It seems to me that any creation of peers which did not almost double the numbers of the Upper House would be no remedy at all, and that a creation of three or four hundred hereditary peers, would, in the first place, be a bad remedy, and would in the next place be only a temporary remedy. There must surely be something radically bad in the constitution of a legislative body, which for the preservation of the state, must from time to time be swamped by the executive body. As one of them I should prefer a reform which went direct to the seat of the evil. Were I one of the peers, I would far rather renounce my privileges and live as a private citizen, with the chance of obtaining a seat in the House of Commons, than remain a member of an assembly so impotent and so ridiculous as the House of Lords would be, if several hundreds of Whigs were sent thither to outvote the Conservatives. Such a measure would give satisfaction to nobody. It could not possibly be final. It would destroy any reverence for the Upper House which might still linger in the public mind and would infallibly lead to the complete abolition of that body.

Melbourne spent the Easter holidays in Hertfordshire, where he heard of a recurrence of domestic disagreements at Storey's Gate, which on more than one occasion previously had excited his regret and concern. His counsel had never been proffered on such occasions, but, when sought, it had been uniformly given in favour of forbearance and peace. In public as in private life he was always for "keeping people if possible from getting wrong with the world." The world he knew has no justice or lenity for domestic jars, no conscience and no pity for the aggrieved. Mr. Norton had in many respects forfeited his official respect, and incurred his personal disesteem. With Colonel Leicester Stanhope, Sir James Graham, and other intimate friends, he had been confidentially consulted as to the means of preventing further contention and the repetition of what they all concurred in reprobating on Mr. Norton's part, as unpardonable and unworthy treatment. Still, he was averse from resort to any step which would bar the way to reconciliation, or give publicity to the rending of household ties. And all his communications, verbal and written, were to the same effect:—

I have just received your letter, with Leicester Stanhope's enclosed, with which I am much pleased. He could not have acted better, nor with more discretion. Never, to be sure, was there such conduct! To set on foot that sort of inquiry without the slightest real ground for it! But it does not surprise me. I have always known that there was there a mixture of folly and violence which might lead to any absurdity or any injustice. You know so well my opinion, that it is unnecessary for me to repeat it. I have always told you that a woman should never part from her husband whilst she can remain with him. If this is generally the case, it is particularly so in such a case as yours: that is, in the case of a young, handsome woman, of lively imagination, fond of company and conversation, and whose celebrity and superiority have necessarily created many enemies. Depend upon it, if a reconciliation is

feasible, there can be no doubt of the prudence of it. It is so evident that it is unnecessary to expatiate upon it. Lord Holland, who is almost the only person who has mentioned the subject to me, is entirely of that opinion.*

Again he wrote:—

If for the sake of your children you think you can endure to return to him, you certainly will act most wisely and prudently for yourself in doing so. I advise you, however, to take no step of yourself or without the advice of Seymour and Graham; and if you determine upon writing to Mr. Barlow, send your letter open to them, giving them a discretionary power either to send or to withhold it. Keep up your spirits; agitate yourself as little as possible; do not be too anxious about rumours and the opinion of "the world;" being (as you are) innocent and in the right, you will in the end bring everything round.

On his return to town he learned with surprise that the injurious inquiries above referred to having ended in nothing, it had been suggested to their author that their direction might be profitably changed, and that he himself should be made the object of them. The political gains from such a course were obvious should litigation in any form ensue, and the pecuniary compensation were it hushed up through fear of exposure might well be set at a high amount. He had every inducement on public and private grounds to avert a controversy so damaging and so distressing; and it hardly need be said that if payment of the utmost damages laid at the suit of Mr. Norton could have been paid consistently with honour and prudence, it would have been well worth his while to enrich his adversary thereby. Compromise, however, was manifestly out of the question. He put himself at once in the professional hands of Sir John Campbell, who, with the assistance of Sergeant Talfourd and Mr. Thesiger undertook the conduct of his defence; and he then wrote to Mrs. Norton:—

* From Panshanger to the Hon. Mrs. Norton, April 10th, 1836.

I hope you will not take it ill if I implore you to try, at least to be calm under these trials. You know that what is alleged (if it be alleged) is utterly false, and what is false can rarely be made to appear true. The steps which it will be prudent to take, it will be impossible to determine until we know more certainly the course that is intended to be pursued.*

But what he preached he was not himself able to practise. The subject became every day more and more the engrossing theme of conversation in society, and of comment in the press. Sensitive at all times to imputations by which others were likely to be affected through him, he could not be unconscious that the fortunes of his friends and adherents were inextricably involved in the issue that was depending. By the law as it then stood no personal testimony by him was admissible; and it was vain to surmise what might be asserted regarding trivial or forgotten details of intimacy stretching over a period of more than five years. Vexation and anxiety at length completely overpowered his physical strength, and for some weeks he was seriously unwell. On the 9th of June he wrote:—

Since I first heard that I was to be proceeded against, I have suffered more intensely than I ever did in my life. I have had neither sleep nor appetite, and I attribute the whole of my illness (at least of the severity of it) to the uneasiness of my mind. Now what is this uneasiness for? Not for my own character, because, as you justly say, the imputation upon me is as nothing. It is not for the political consequences to myself, although I deeply feel the consequences which my indiscretion may bring upon those who are attached to me and follow my fortunes. The real and principal object of my anxiety and solicitude is you, and the situation in which you have been so unjustly placed, by the circumstances which have taken place.

* April 23rd, 1836.

Meanwhile, lest it should be thought that he was sacrificing the public interest to his own, he told the King that he was ready to resign. His Majesty behaved with great consideration and kindness, deprecating his doing so in the strongest terms for such a cause and assuring him that he paid no regard to the pending accusation. On being made acquainted with the circumstance, the Duke of Wellington at once assured Melbourne that he saw no reason for his relinquishing office, and that if he were to do so, he for one would certainly not make one of any combination that might in consequence be formed. So matters continued till the 22nd of June, when the case came on for trial before Chief Justice Tindal in the Court of Common Pleas. The first names called on the special jurors' panel were Sir Robert Peel and Mr. F. Baring, neither of whom answered. Of the twelve persons eventually sworn, several were known to hold Conservative opinions; others were believed to be of the opposite way of thinking; and about the rest nothing distinctly could be ascertained. Happily no differences arose among them; and it was likewise noticed that the counsel on both sides appeared to have been chosen without respect to party. Sir William Follett, who had recently filled the office of Solicitor-General, led for the plaintiff; and though he had not advised his going to trial, stated the case as if he reckoned on obtaining a verdict. The witnesses were chiefly discarded servants, nearly all of damaged character, who had been, for a considerable time before, kept out of the way at the country seat of Lord Grantley, and none of whom professed to be able to swear to any circumstances within the three preceding years. At the close of the plaintiff's case, late in the day, the Attorney-General asked for an adjournment; but on an intimation from the jury, in which the judge also concurred, he waived the suggestion, and without calling witnesses proceeded to analyse the evidence that had been adduced. He branded the whole story as a tissue of fabrications which it was impossible men of discernment and impartiality could believe; and though his client was in-

admissible as a witness he was authorised to state upon the honour of a peer that the charge was entirely false. The judge left the issue fairly to the jury, who without leaving the box, returned a verdict of acquittal. A loud cheer broke forth at the announcement, which was echoed by the crowd waiting without the court. At an audience next day, William IV. cordially congratulated the minister on having baffled the machinations which, he did not doubt, had had their origin in sinister aims fomented by the meaner animosities of party. His daughter, Lady Mary Fox, was the intimate friend of Mrs. Norton, and remained steadfast in her attachment throughout. Lord Wynford had been Mr. Norton's guardian, and current rumour ascribed to him an active share in the attempt to overthrow the Government by impeaching the personal conduct of its chief. It was even said that a princely personage had not disdained to encourage the anonymous vilipending, by which it was evidently hoped to imbue the minds of society in general with an amount of prejudice that ordinary jurors would consciously or unconsciously be unable to disregard.

A few days afterwards the Duke of Cumberland happening to meet Melbourne in the corridor of the House of Lords, said:—

> Have you seen Wynford? He wishes to speak to you; and it is in order to assure you, upon his honour, that he has had nothing to do with this affair, nor indeed any of us. We would do nothing so ungentlemanlike. The moment I heard he was charged with it, I went to him, and asked him, and he solemnly denied it.

Melbourne replied that he never believed mere rumours, and of course his Royal Highness's declaration was perfectly satisfactory. On entering the house, Lord Wynford sent a messenger to say that he wished to speak to him, and that being lame he could not conveniently cross the floor. He repeated the disclaimer already made by the Duke, adding that he had never heard of the action until four days after it

had been commenced, and that as for that unfortunate young man, as he termed his ward, he had not seen him for two or three years.

Having successfully opposed or mutilated nearly all the ministerial measures, Lyndhurst resolved upon a review of the session:—

He had been accused unreasonably, he said, with being critical; and untruly of being ambitious. Under two sovereigns he had had the custody of that "splendid bauble," as the greater revolutionist of former times had called the Mace. His aspirings had been fully satisfied, and he was now influenced only by a sense of duty. But contrasting ministerial promises with the legislative fruits of the year, he could not help thinking that the noble Viscount had proved his incapacity to guide the counsels of the Crown. The result had been as disproportioned in execution to the expectations which were held out, as the lofty position of the noble Lord at that period, with his humbled condition at that moment. As was said of one of his predecessors in office, "his promises were as he then was, mighty; his performances as he now is, nothing." The bill of the Chancellor to reform the Court of Equity fell still-born—*requiescat in pace.* He would not disturb its ashes. The Ecclesiastical Courts Bill was brought in, but likewise was allowed to slumber. A Stanneries Bill had indeed been passed; but it would ever bear the reproach of being the first infraction of a rule theretofore deemed fundamental in the constitution that the judges who sat in our courts should be irremovable save for proved or admitted delinquency. Ministers had proposed that as Irish Corporations had been exclusively in the hands of Protestants, they should henceforth be exclusively in the hands of Catholics, and the Opposition proposed to do away with them altogether. The Stamp duties on Newspapers Bill, was one of doubtful and hazardous character. They were ready to pass the Tithe Bill without an abstract

principle for the purpose of plundering the Church of Ireland; but as this condition was insisted on, the measure was rejected. The Charitable Trusts Bill was indeed rejected, on account of the vicious principle that Dissenters should be eligible as trustees of old foundations. Nothing could be more inconsistent with a due desire to maintain the interests of the Established Church, than that school endowments should be administered by that class of persons. Ministers had abandoned the Church Pluralities Bill, and the Regulation of Fees Bill, at the dictation of certain parties. They abandoned their own Registration Bill to please the same section of their supporters—"Was there ever such a government?" Was the decay and wretchedness so visible upon one side of Downing Street relieved by the brilliant glare of the other? Was the foreign policy one to make other nations court their alliance; to view them with friendship and regard, or, with aversion and loathing?

After alluding to the failure of the auxiliary legion in Spain defacing the records of Wellington's greatest triumphs, he continued:—

The noble Viscount stood erect among all his disasters, reverses, and perils. He appeared unmoved. His language was always lofty, swelling in proportion as the pediment on which he stood was reeling and staggering. In former times amid such disasters there would be only one course for a minister to pursue. These, however, were antiquated notions. A fastidious delicacy formed no part of the character of the noble Viscount. He told them that, notwithstanding the insubordinate temper of his crew, he would stick to the vessel while a single plank remained afloat. But, as a friendly adviser, he would recommend him to get as speedily as possible into still water.

The minister thus assailed, was not unequal to the occasion. His character and policy were alike challenged by the subtlest and most powerful of his adversaries. He

seems to have been thoroughly roused to a sense of what he owed to himself and his colleagues, and the great party out of doors that supported them; and, evading no portion of the issue, he made the happiest and ablest speech of his life:—

I readily admit the great power and eloquence of the noble and learned lord. His clearness in argument and dexterity in sarcasm, no one can deny; and if he will be satisfied with a compliment confined strictly to ability, I am ready to render him that homage. But, my lords, ability is not everything, propriety of conduct—the *verecundia*—should be combined with the *ingenium*, to make a great man and a statesman. It is not enough to be *duræ frontis, perditæ audaciæ*. The noble and learned lord has referred to several historical characters, to whom he has been pleased to say that I bear some resemblance. I beg in return to remind him of what once was said by Lord Bristol of a great statesman of former times (the Earl of Strafford) to whom, I think, the noble and learned lord might not inapplicably be compared: "The malignity of his practices was hugely aggravated by his vast talents, whereof God hath given the use, but the devil the application." What must the House think of the noble and learned lord when he concludes his speech with a miserable motion for returns, which, from the numerous details entered upon by him in the course of his address, he appears scarcely to stand in need of? He takes credit to himself and his party, for having behaved with the greatest meekness and leniency towards me and my colleagues throughout the course of the present session. Now, let me ask, Why was it that noble lords took up this meek and patient line of conduct? Was it because they were not willing to take upon themselves the government of the country, if we were removed? or was it that they approved of our measures, and were willing to retain us in power? If they did not approve of our measures, if they did not

approve of the line of conduct we are pursuing in the administration of affairs, why, let me ask, did they not make some motion of censure? But they distrusted in fact, not us, but their own power in the country. The noble and learned lord boasts that they are ready to appeal to the people; then, in heaven's name, why not do so? Why do they not take some steps towards an appeal of this kind, as by an address to the Crown for our removal? That would be a course which would speedily operate as an appeal to the feelings of the nation, such as the noble and learned lord seems so anxiously to desire, and the result of which would be to convince him that the country at large has no participation in the opinions professed by himself and his party. Indeed, the noble lords on the opposite side of the House seem to have silently acknowledged this melancholy truth, for although his speech was of a nature calculated to create a great and deep impression on the minds of those who heard him, I could not but observe that the cheers with which he was greeted were faint and feeble in the extreme: for noble lords know well that, if they pledged themselves to the truth of all that fell from him, they would not be doing their duty if they allowed the administration of affairs to remain in the hands of his Majesty's present Government, during the period which must, in all probability, elapse between this and the next session of Parliament. It will not be expected of me to go through the retrospect of all that has occurred in the present session. If I were to do so, it is not probable that I should bring afresh to conviction your lordships' minds in regard to those proceedings; and for myself I can only say that, after such a retrospect, I should still remain of opinion that the measures we have espoused have been good and proper ones, measures of which the country stood in need; and that the arguments by which they were supported were founded upon a firm basis of truth. The promises made in the King's speech were what I had the power of

making, but their performance I could not command. Your lordships it was who interfered, and prevented me from carrying those promises into effect. If your lordships had not interfered in the way you have done, and that upon grounds which I could hardly have anticipated, and in which, I must say, you stood entirely alone, many of the measures proposed would not have been impeded in their progress. You have thrown out the Registration of Voters Bill, the Post Office Bill, and the Catholic Marriages Bill, which had been agreed to by your own party in the House of Commons. You bring yourselves into this dilemma: one of two things is undoubtedly true; either that the gentlemen of your party in the other House did not oppose these measures because they feared the unpopularity which would accrue to them for so doing, and chose rather to leave the task to you in this House—most improper conduct if it be so, which, however, I will not enter upon further; or that those which you consider your friends elsewhere differ with you in respect to your opposition to these measures—in which case you must admit yourselves to stand the while unsupported, in and out of Parliament, in rejecting measures which everybody but yourselves consider in the highest degree important and advantageous to the country. And this, I will candidly say, is a position in which I would not wish to see your Lordships stand in the eyes of the country. I have been accused of entertaining a desire to hold up to contempt the House of Lords, and break in upon its constitutional powers in the State. This is not the case. I know too well the assistance and the services which such a branch of the constitution is capable of rendering to the State; and I know full well that the State stands in need of all the honest service which it can command. It is not me, then, whom your Lordships have to accuse, but your own conduct only, if you find your power and influence with the people upon the decline. If it should ever happen that the party opposite should hold office again, and you

should find yourselves bringing forward the very measures which you are now rejecting, as has happened to you before, it will be much less easy for you to explain that conduct to the satisfaction of the public, and to your own consciences, than it is for me to stand erect under the load which the noble and learned lord says I have pressing me down.

Finally, with reference to his own position between a country growing apathetic in prosperity, and the Court growing daily adverse, and even discourteous, in its demeanour, he felt that his best safety lay in plainness and boldness of speech :—

The noble and learned lord kindly advises me to resign, notwithstanding his own great horror of taking office after his ambition is already so fully satisfied. But I will tell the noble and learned lord that I will not be accessory to the sacrifice of himself, which he would be ready to make if the burthen of the Great Seal were again forced upon him. I conscientiously believe that the well-being of the country requires in the judgment of the people that I should hold my present office—and hold it I will—until I am removed.

In this memorable duel neither of the combatants lost temper, and, being men of the world, frankly owned the skill of each other's fence. Lyndhurst is said to have crossed the House when it was over, and chatted laughingly with his former colleague, as often was his way.* The cautious Ripon told Charles Greville that he thought the attack indiscreet ;† and the Duke of Wellington, who thought skirmishing of this kind useful, provided he was not compromised by the reckless dash of a subordinate, quietly paced the *champ clos* of debate, moodily hinting disapprobation, but evincing no disposition to put his lance in rest. Lord Holland thought the reply of his leader admirable, and he was a critic not easily satisfied.

* Campbell's ' Life of Lyndhurst,' p. 116.

† The ' Greville Memoirs,' vol. iii. p. 362.

Timidity and time-serving cavilled at the Premier's words, and blamed him for thus publicly giving warning to the King. But Melbourne knew with whom he had to deal, and understanding thoroughly the danger and the duty of the hour, shrank from neither. When ill-treated by the sovereign in 1834 he had not complained. When recalled to power he had not by look or word exulted. The frequently recurring overflow of royal vexation did not provoke him in the closet or at the council-table, to utter a syllable to chafe susceptibilities which he knew could not be controlled. Individually he was willing to bear silently the frowardness that too clearly was attributable to the spite of others rather than to any set purpose on the part of the aged monarch. But when the peace and progress of the country were at stake, and the balance of the constitution threatened, and the forms of legislation seemed to be made use of to compass the short-sighted designs of an eager minority, in defiance of the preponderant will of the nation, he threw aside his courtier gloves and stood, as his ancestor had done in the Commons of James II., firm and outspoken for the supreme authority of Parliament. He had been brought up at the knee of Fox; had mourned in youth over his grave; and now, when placed in circumstances not dissimilar, he recalled his language and his example. When George III., in 1782, was compelled by the House of Commons to accept the Whigs, they felt that their power of rescuing the country from the perils which then encompassed it was insecure, unless the tenure on which that power rested was clearly recognised. On the night that Lord North resigned Fox declared that, as the House had now proved their abhorrence of government by influence, they must take care that it should not be renewed. The new ministers must ever bear in mind that fact, and remember that to the House they owed their situations.*

* Parl. Hist. vol. xxii. p. 1221, March 20th, 1782.

CHAPTER VII.

LATTER DAYS OF WILLIAM IV.

Irish appointments—Guests at the Palace—Financial crisis—Death of Augustus Lamb—Dissatisfaction of the Speaker—Correspondence with the Bishop of Ripon.

At the close of the Session the Ministerial sky was indeed heavily overcast. Radicals and Tories alternately and sometimes co-operatively attacked the Government in the Commons; Charles Buller, Hume, and Duncombe, being the most outspoken in adverse criticism. On several questions they could command but small majorities consisting, as they were daily reminded, of Catholic votes. From this text denunciations were incessantly hurled against them by name. Exeter Hall rang with invectives; and the judgments of heaven were foretold from the pulpit as certain to fall upon a nation that tolerated admission of Papists to the Privy Council, and mixed education in primary schools. The Protestant faith was said to be in danger from a combination of godless Whigs and surpliced emissaries of Rome, and the jealousies of race were diligently excited to fan and inflame those of creed. Remonstrance could hardly get a hearing out of doors; and within the nearly balanced state of parties rendered from day to day the issue on every question of legislative detail uncertain. Symptoms of weariness and disgust appeared in the looks and language of more than one of the Cabinet, and Hobhouse thought that—

Even quiet and courageous Lord Melbourne began to give

way. At our meeting on the 9th of August, when we discussed whether Parliament should meet in November, and the decision turned on the position of the administration, our Chief told us that he had doubts whether it was right and becoming to go on in our present condition; the difficulties of which he proceeded to lay bare in all plainness of speech.* He said that a man must have the patience of an ass to stand against such odds; but he saw no reason for meeting in November unless it was probable that the Lords would give way on the Irish Corporation Bill, and for his part he thought they were less likely to concede if we forced a meeting in November than if we met at the usual time.†

This was his habitual way of dealing with those he trusted. Without mutual candour he felt there could be no thorough confidence and no true cohesion: and without oneness of purpose and spirit he knew that they could not weather the gale. If the heart of any were failing, better let them say so in time, and give place to others who were more stout and strenuous; or if the waverers had become numerous let them agree to strike their flag before they were beaten men. But no good could possibly come of delusion or disguise. If they had still faith in him and their cause, he would not give way; but they must show it and he must know it. And thus with a sharp and sometimes startling knock, he would try the tire of every wheel before each fresh departure. When satisfied that all was sound, he would saunter down to the House of Lords, throw himself back in his seat and listen imperturbably to the raillery or rage of his opponents, with an expression of complete content, and an occasional intimation that he thought them very foolish people:—

Lord Lansdowne said to me, privately, that, if the Lords carried a vote of want of confidence, he, for one, would resign. He thought they would not propose that vote, because they were afraid of putting themselves in the

* 'Recollections,' p. 323. † 'Hobhouse,' vol. iii. pp. 269, 270.

wrong. I dissented from this view: but Lord Lansdowne repeated his determination. Lord Holland also expressed his doubts as to the propriety of going on much longer against the House of Lords, especially if we lost any more elections in large communities.*

The exhumation of an obsolete process of the Court of Exchequer, termed a writ of rebellion, and its application by that tribunal to enforce the payment of tithes, caused a new excitement throughout the southern provinces of Ireland. Resistance to the unpopular impost had been carried on through the instrumentality of social combinations rather than by any legal strategy to defeat the force of law. The judges ruled that, upon proof made before them, that the parish where tithes were unpaid was in a state of sedition, the ordinary proceedings in an action for debt might be dispensed with, and that a writ of rebellion having been served, judgment, with heavy costs, might be recovered, and execution issued, without any trial in the county where the cause of action arose. It was a flank movement so formidable that it threatened completely to turn the popular position; and eventually it was destined to put an end to the anti-tithe war, which had now lasted seven years. Many desperate expedients were proposed; but amongst others that to which the following note refers:—

I see, with great dismay, in the newspapers, the proposition of Henry Grattan at this foolish association of theirs, to proclaim a Hibernian reward for any policeman who refuses to act in the execution of a writ of rebellion. This is too bad. You will I suppose be soon in Dublin. I have written to Mulgrave by to-night's post upon the subject.†

By the death of Baron Smith a vacancy was created in the Court of Exchequer, which Plunket recommended should be offered to O'Loghlen, not only because of his pre-eminent fitness and priority of claim, but because it afforded the

* 'Hobhouse,' vol. iii. pp. 269, 270.

† From South Street, August 22nd, 1836.

opportunity, long desired, of placing a Catholic on the Bench. The Lord Lieutenant, concurring entirely in these views, wrote without delay to the Attorney-General, who was then abroad, that being "desirous to promote whatever he might consider as his interest, he did not feel that he could do otherwise than offer him, without hesitation, the vacant seat in the Exchequer; at the same time he could not attempt to conceal that he should much regret to lose his valuable assistance in his present post, and that he made the proposal with some hope that he might prefer continuing, for the present, Attorney-General, a decision which he should learn with great satisfaction."* On the same day the Chief Secretary wrote, in terms of equal compliment, to the same effect. From Paris the reply of O'Loghlen reiterated the opinion he had frequently expressed that the Attorney-General ought not to accept the place of a Puisne Judge, but leave the reward of learning and service to some less fortunate member of the profession. He preferred remaining at the head of the bar, and retaining his seat in the House of Commons. Difficulties arose, however, as to filling up the office of Solicitor-General, which the promotion of Mr. Richards would have rendered necessary; and, ultimately, though not without extreme reluctance, he consented to become the Baron of the Exchequer, while Mr. Woulffe was made Solicitor-General. O'Loghlen, however, did not waive his equitable title to a higher station; and although it was impossible that any condition should be made, the Government felt that they owed him a real obligation for the manner in which he acted; and on the retirement of Sir William M'Mahan in 1837, he was advanced to the position of Master of the Rolls. Before accepting this lucrative and important office, he voluntarily suggested, however, that should it become possible at any future time for O'Connell to be appointed in his stead, he should be allowed to make way for him. O'Loghlen's sense of what he in common with the whole Catholic bar owed to their Liberator was deep and

* Earl of Mulgrave to Mr. O'Loghlen, September 9th, 1836.

lasting: greater still the grateful sense of obligation which he cherished for signal acts of personal kindness, on many important occasions. But O'Connell was in no respects cognizant at the time of the curious suggestion made by his friend when about to accept the Rolls. His own thoughts had never turned in that direction. He would undoubtedly have liked the offer of the Attorney-Generalship. That was the situation for which he was peculiarly fitted, and which had for him all the attractions of professional distinction and political power. It has indeed been supposed that, at the commencement of the session of this year, Melbourne actually proposed it to him, and that he would have been appointed but for the peremptory refusal of the King. Such an idea could only have arisen from some misapprehension that cannot now be explained. Whatever the Premier's disposition may have been or his appreciation of the benefit that might have accrued from such an appointment, it was at that moment utterly impossible. His Cabinet would certainly have never agreed to what they would have naturally considered an act of suicide; and even if they had, it is wholly incredible that the proposal would have been sanctioned by William IV., then more than ever out of humour with his ministers. In Ireland the elevation of Baron O'Loghlen to the highest seat in Equity to which a Catholic was then eligible, was highly popular; and the admirable manner in which he performed his duties at the Rolls, speedily disarmed all party criticism.

For some time William IV. persisted in omitting the members of the Cabinet from his invitations to dinner; and, except the officers of the household, no one holding political office partook of his hospitality. His favourite guests were those who were most distinguished for their adverse zeal. Greville himself, intensely Conservative, calls him a true King of the Tories, and believed he was only waiting an opportunity to get rid of the Liberals. Many stories are told of the caprices and oddities of his manner at this time. He was fond of giving dinners at which the

guests were bidden in accordance with a fancy of his own, on account of their belonging to a particular profession or calling. One day he had an equal number of military and naval officers, with the officials belonging to their respective departments. The land forces were ranged on one side of the table, and the sailors on the other. His Majesty gave several toasts with appropriate speeches by way of preface. That of the evening was, the health of the two services, whose valour and devotion he loudly extolled. They should never forget that it was their peculiar good fortune to serve a country where men of all ranks from the highest to the lowest were eligible to command. "Here on my right," said the King with especial emphasis, "is my noble friend descended from a line of ancestry as ancient as my own; and here on my left is my gallant friend, a rear-admiral sprung from the very dregs of the people." On another day the banquet was given to prelates and clerical dignitaries of various degrees. The toasts were appropriately ecclesiastical. That of the Church was prefaced by its temporal head, with an account of his own change of opinions:—

> When I was a young man, as well as I can remember I believed in nothing but pleasure and folly; nothing at all. But when I went to sea, got into a gale, and saw the wonders of the mighty deep, then I believed; and I have been a sincere Christian ever since.

William IV. had never tried to conceal his mortification at having had to take back the Whigs; and as the chance of his ever being able to get rid of them lessened with his sense of failing health, he gave way more and more to petulance and discourtesy. At a council on the 21st of September the Chancellor, Melbourne, Palmerston, Russell, Minto, Glenelg and Labouchere being present, his demeanour was most ungracious. When the petition of Captain Sartorius for reinstatement to his rank was read, he said, without asking the opinion of the First Lord of the Admiralty, that its prayer must be granted, for Commodore

Napier was restored when he knew he was doing wrong, while Captain Sartorius might have believed himself doing only that which was right. Lord Minto felt it to be his duty as First Lord of the Admiralty to state the reasons which led him to take a somewhat different view. The King, who was out of temper, said sharply:—

> Unless your Lordship is quite sure of that, I must beg leave to say that I differ from you, and I do not believe it to be so. I desire you will furnish me with proofs of it immediately. The next time I see you, you will be prepared with the proofs of what you say, for unless I see them I shall not believe one word of it.

No response was made by the offended minister to this strange sally. His colleagues looked at one another and then at their chief. It was one of the occasions where his *un*-common sense served him better than more heroic qualities. He would hardly have been justified under other circumstances in listening silently to such words addressed in council to one whose honour was untarnished, and for whom having lately named him for the high post he filled he was not indirectly responsible. But Melbourne knew better than those around him the waywardness and weakness of the aged Prince; and could better make allowance for his vexation at being surrounded by ministers he had once dismissed and longed to dismiss again. To furnish him with a pretence for quarrels or to precipitate a crisis upon grounds which the public could never be made to comprehend, would have been unpardonable folly. The power to shut one's eyes is as valuable a privilege at times as the right to keep them open and look stern. The fate of his party he had long felt was in his hands, and a hot word or a hasty step might plunge everything into confusion. He suggested therefore without comment that the petition of Sartorius should be referred to the Admiralty to report upon, and this being the last business of the day the Council thereupon broke up. When they reassembled on

the 5th of October, the report being favourable the gallant officer was restored. Melbourne took care to be present; the First Lord of the Admiralty did not attend; and by that time the fretful mood of valetudinarian Majesty had passed away.*

It was proposed about this time to confer the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland, vacant since the death of Sir George Hill, on Mr. Sheil. The office had been held before the Union by Mr. Flood and other distinguished men, and it had always been regarded as a parliamentary office. For the sake of retrenchment, the finance committee of 1830 had recommended that the salary should be reduced, and that it should be held in future *quamdiu se bene gesserit*, and that it should not be compatible with a seat in the House of Commons. The difficulty had been overlooked in the first instance, and we find the First Lord asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer for fuller information on the subject:—

> You never informed me what I was to say to Sheil respecting the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland. Just send me word of the nature of the intended arrangement; pray let me know anything else about appointments and arrangements. I am to have Dudley Stuart and his deputation bothering about the Poles to-morrow at three. Pray come too.†

An illustration of the gentle way in which he exercised a superintending influence over all departments of the Government, for which his rare diversity of knowledge of men and things especially qualified him, is afforded by a question addressed to one of his colleagues *en passant* between other topics of greater interest, regarding the Board of Medical Examiners recently constituted—Sir Anthony Carlisle, an odd but clever man, had written to him in a certain tone of jealousy at having been omitted:—

* In Mr. Greville's account of the transaction there is obviously some inaccuracy; that he did not hear correctly what was said by Lord Minto, is evident from the expressions ascribed to the King.

† Notes from South Street, August 15th and 21st, 1836.

He is an eccentric man, but of ability. I know not upon what principle you have selected the names, and whether it is one which would exclude him, but your list appears to me to be rather weak in surgery.*

The Premier remained in or near town during the autumn, noting with anxious care the darkening signs of the times. His prescient misgivings in the beginning of the year were but too fatally realised, though many circumstances beyond his ken contributed to deepen the financial embarrassment and industrial affliction that ensued. Then plenteous corn crops in succession, and a great expansion of trade rendered food abundant, prices high, and the revenue overflowing. Joint-stock speculation, especially in banking, ran more and more wild. Till April the bank rate of interest did not exceed three and a half per cent, and the country issues went on increasing during the summer, unchecked by warnings from a central source of supply, and the drain of gold which had set in from all parts of Europe, consequent upon the measures of President Jackson for the establishment of a metallic currency in the United States. Gloomy forebodings of a bad harvest were widely entertained in July, and by the end of August it was certain the yield would be short throughout the United Kingdom, and that corn would have to be more largely than ever purchased abroad. When the stock of bullion in the Bank of England had fallen to five millions, the rate of discount was advanced to four per cent, but it subsequently rose as the pressure for assistance grew more exigent. Failures were anticipated in London and other seats of industry, and threatening symptoms multiplied of a commercial panic nigh at hand. Melbourne marked with anxious solicitude the presages of impending storm. To the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had gone to Ireland after the Session, he wrote:—

Baring† has informed you of all that has been done with

* From Downing Street, September 8th, 1836.

† Francis, eldest son of Sir Thomas Baring of Stratton, then Financial

respect to the money market, and also that it would be better that you should be here upon the spot. I am sorry to interrupt your holidays, but considering the general anxiety which prevails, and the vast interests which are concerned, and that it is probable that decisive steps may be necessary to be taken, I think you will agree with me that the sooner you are here the better.*

But things went speedily from bad to worse, and Melbourne's anxieties increased daily, though he preserved throughout the same air of equanimity, and strove to impart his own cheeriness of spirit to dejected comrades and desponding friends. Confidentially he wrote on the 20th of October:—

There is a great outcry and some apprehension, how well-founded it is impossible to say when there is necessarily so much self-interest always at work, and so many private ends to be promoted. I do not mind the railing nor the abuse, but I think it would be awkward if half-a-dozen houses were to come tumbling about our ears in your absence. Pray therefore that you get back upon the intelligence of the first failure—I know in such a conjuncture little can be done, but the use of constant and firm language is necessary, and for that the presence of as much authority as can be mustered is desirable.†

A week later he wrote:—

I was talking to Baring yesterday about your coming. Of course your absence gives rise to a good deal of observation, but he said, and I agree with him, that as it had been given out that you were not to return until November, your coming earlier might excite apprehension, and give rise to a supposition of greater alarm than the Government really feel. But he seemed to think, and in

Secretary of the Treasury; in 1839, Chancellor of the Exchequer; in 1849, First Lord of the Admiralty, and in 1865, created Lord Northbrook.

* From Downing Street, September 8th, 1836.

† From Downing Street.

this also I agree with him, that the sooner you could be here after the first of November the better. The measures, as you say, have in fact been bold, but the throwing away two or three hundred thousand pounds of the public money is often very little thought of, whilst, on the contrary, inconveniencing and discontenting the moneyed men creates a clamour as shrill and as unappeasable as does the killing of a pig. Nothing is so violent as a moneyed interest in difficulties, nothing so loud, and it is often, in my opinion, politic to commit a little extravagance in order to relieve them. I say nothing of the state of things, because as I write from here you will have received a more recent account before you receive this.*

Spring Rice returned forthwith to London; and remained at his post in constant communication with the financial authorities in the city.

As one of the measures to allay the panic and afford relief to the Money Market, it was resolved to offer an increased rate of interest to a certain amount on Exchequer bills. Like all expedients of the kind, it was open to the objection that it must work partially, and in many cases profitably, to those who stood the least in need of extraordinary aid from the State; while the aid must confessedly be furnished at the expense of the whole community. As a precedent, moreover, it was seriously to be deprecated on constitutional as well as economic grounds. This was no doubt the consideration which led Melbourne to write a laconic note, amounting to a command, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should forthwith communicate to his Majesty the nature and extent of the measure in contemplation :—

I think you should send a statement of our determination to the King, in order that he may know it before it is made public.†

* From Brocket Hall, October 28th, 1836.

† From South Street, November 17th.

Certain worshippers of Wordsworth applied to the Government for such a pension as would distinctively acknowledge his claim as the first of living poets. Melbourne had no objection to a liberal grant, but, "as a critic he could not sanction it, if it was to be taken as affirming the position that he was the first poet of the country or even of the age. There must be a *protestando* to this effect in the grant."*

Lord Mulgrave's recommendation, approved by Lord J. Russell, was, after consideration,† sanctioned by him that Lords Miltown and Talbot de Malahide, Baron Richards, Mr. Villiers Stuart, the Chief Remembrancer Mr. A. R. Blake, and Mr. (afterwards Lord) Carew, should be added to the Privy Council of Ireland.

A provision in a recent act which had passed without debate or protest caused no little outcry in Norfolk and Suffolk about this time, because it required the owner's name of a taxed cart to be painted on it in letters two instead of one inch long, as had been the custom heretofore. Lord Albemarle undertook to represent the grievance of his tenants and neighbours to the head of the Government which he did with no little emphasis, informing him that Radicals and Tories united in the outcry, and that many while complying with the new law, added under the hated letters, "badge imposed by the Whigs." "It is too foolish," said Melbourne, "but I suppose there is no great reason for the thing, and we may promise to alter it;"‡ it was done the following session.

As the constitution of his afflicted son betrayed increasing signs of giving way from the frequency of the attacks to which he had long been subject, his solicitude about him increased in tenderness. He sat frequently in his room for hours, and watched with care every change in the sufferer's condition. He mentioned afterwards, not without emotion,

* From Downing Street, October 20th, 1836.

† MS. memorandum in Lord Melbourne's handwriting, November 17th, 1836. See *Dublin Gazette*. ‡ Letter from South Street.

that the evening before the event long anticipated, he was occupied in writing letters, when an incident occurred like that which he had heard of in other cases, and of which till then he had been incredulous:—

> Augustus was lying on a sofa near me; he had been reading, but I thought had dropped asleep. Suddenly he said to me in a quiet and reflective tone: "I wish you would give me some franks, that I may write and thank people who have been kind in their inquiries." The pen dropped from my hand as if I had been struck; for the words and the manner were as clear and thoughtful as if no cloud had ever hung heavily over him. I cannot give any notion of what I felt; for I believed it to be as it proved the summons they call the lightning before death. In a few hours he was gone.*

Pitiful is the commonplace of condolence which implies, if it does not directly plead in deprecation of sorrow that the termination of protracted suffering must be regarded rather as a relief. To one who in the midst of political excitements and social flatteries had never ceased to watch anxiously and to grieve silently over his afflicted son it would have been a poor mockery of comfort this, that thenceforth there remained no object of his woman-like care. It has been finely said "that the fulness of sorrow is great, but how much greater is its emptiness."†

In a private letter during the winter of 1836, we find him complaining that lameness in the right knee prevented his leaving home for some days, which he attributed to gout.‡ In reply to inquiries about his health, which had for some weeks been such as to disable him from taking active exercise, he added:—

> I am rather worse than I was; at least during these last two nights I have had more pain. But these rheumatic affec-

* November 27th, 1836.

† Trelawny, in 'The Adventures of a Younger Son.'

‡ From South Street, December 9th, 1836.

tions when they get hold of one, are not got rid of in a moment."

The following week he was "getting better, but was still confined to the house and would be for some days."

In an army whose comparative strength does not enable it to make rapid progress, there are always importunates for promotion, and malcontents who want some mark of distinction, as they say. Self-interest can afford to be considerate on the sanguine eve of victory, but it grows very matter-of-fact in its grumblings, when the odds look doubtful. All the winter the Premier was beset with applications for titles and decorations, steps in the peerage and imperial coronets, by Scotch and Irish nobles. The Court was believed to be unyielding, and therefore must be pressed to grant each sighed-for honour ere the final *fracas* came. Melbourne, whose difficulties were fully revealed to few, had frugally to husband his resources and make his patronage go as far as he could: and when a pluralist of honours dropped, he took care to part his coat of many colours among covetous brethren. In December he writes:—

From what I hear it is not to be expected that the Duke of Montrose will last very long. His lieutenancies it will not be difficult to supply. In the county of Stirling there is Lord Abercromby and Mr. Murray of Polmain and for the county of Dumbarton, Sir James Colquhoun, the properest person, has stated to the Lord Advocate some time since his determination to support the present Government. But what do you say about the Blue Ribband? Carlisle I believe to be desirous of it, and he is in every respect a proper person. The Duke of Somerset has shown no disposition to support us. I should like to know your opinion upon the subject. John Russell is very anxious that I should propose to the King to make three or four peers before the meeting of Parliament. I have never seen much advantage in this step myself, and I am puzzled about the people. Some promises were made by Grey

and confirmed by me. Portman and Rosebery would be very good, and might be made without inconvenience, as they vacate no seats in the House of Commons. But Fraser of Lovat, and Caulfield, Lord Charlemont's brother, are not so well. I fear the effect which these creations might have in Ireland and Scotland, where there are so many who think themselves to be better entitled to the honour. I fear indeed the consequences of the step altogether. I am aprehensive that though it gives little strength, it will create much discontent. I hope you will consider the foreign question well before the meeting, that we may make the best defence we can. I do not expect a very serious attack upon the Poor Law in Parliament, but we should be prepared with a full defence, and also we should think well upon this question of joint-stock banks. I am convinced there is no mode of entirely preventing the abuse of credit; but it may perhaps be checked.*

It was agreed that Lord Carlisle should have the Garter; and he recommended Lords Ducie, Yarborough, and Howard of Effingham to be made Earls. Beyond these and an English Barony for Lord Lovat he was not disposed to go.†

What was to be done with the vexed question of Irish Church establishment? The prospect daily grew more dim of any accommodation between the two Houses on the subject. To the appropriation clause both the previous and the existing House of Commons were pledged, and by the deliberate reiteration of that pledge, the Liberals had displaced their rivals, and had undertaken to govern the country. Yet so hopeless seemed the chance of the House of Lords being induced to yield, and so urgent was the need of a settlement of the tithe question on some basis of compromise, that on all sides ministers were now pressed to abandon the appropriation clause, and attempt some other method of dealing with the perplexity. Elaborate state-

* To Lord Lansdowne, from South Street, December 29th, 1836..

† From South Street, January 2nd, 1837.

ments prepared under the auspices of Mr. Drummond were brought by Lord Morpeth under the consideration of the Premier. In transmitting them to Lord Lansdowne, he observed:—

I very much agree with those who think that if we decided upon pressing the appropriation clause no further, we should give it up at once, clearly and distinctly saying that we brought it forward because we thought it right and just in itself, and conducive to the interests of Ireland; and because we conceived it to be in accordance with the opinion of the people, as it certainly was with that of the majority of the House of Commons of 1834, which majority in fact forced the measure upon us. But supposing our course decided upon this point, what are we to do then? The various plans of providing for the payment of all religions will, I feel certain, entirely fail; and I do not think we should be justified in proposing them upon the principle stated by Morpeth, of the weakened state of the Government, and the hoplessness of its continuance. A minister has no more right to treat a case as desperate than has a physician; events are too uncertain, and results differ too much from anticipations, to permit such conduct. If, on the other hand, it were thought prudent to confine ourselves to a measure, such as Duncannon suggests, which should merely facilitate and quicken the operation of Stanley's Act, I feel convinced that we should not be able to pursue such a course. The Opposition would press upon us, and that irresistibly, the settlement of the tithe question, and the reformation of the chapters, the benefices, &c., in respect of which objects they would profess themselves willing to co-operate with us. The only mode of acting then left for us is to bring in, as O'Connell suggests, the bill of 1834, and to add to it such changes of the present state of the establishment as may seem expedient.*

* From South Street, December 26th, 1836.

Events more than justified ere long, the sagacity of his patience and persistency. Had he yielded to the promptings of vexation or despondency at the close of 1836, the great administrative experiment of sectarian equality which he had undertaken, would be said to have practically failed. Municipal self-government, under the advice of Sir R. Peel and Lord Lyndhurst, would have been permanently swept away in Ireland, and because a majority of her people went to Mass, they would have been declared by the imperial Parliament disinherited of the primary rights of citizenship; servile war against the Anglican clergy, with all its barbarising horrors, would have been prolonged indefinitely; men would still have been tried for their lives by judges and juries belonging to the creed of one-tenth of the community; royalty would have been once more identified in the minds of millions with the policy of oppression, and to use the words of Lord J. Russell, Ireland would still "have been occupied not governed." Melbourne, disheartened but undismayed, did not to his friend affect to see his way. He only thought and said they ought to hold their ground till they were driven from it by the power that had placed them there. They did so, and before six weeks an unlooked-for majority of eighty ratified their policy, and before six months the crown had devolved to a youthful Sovereign, who placed in them unlimited confidence, and whose name was to be associated in Ireland with every measure of lasting peace and progress. Well might it be said that "a minister has no more right to treat a case as desperate than has a physician."

Mr. Abercomby had, after the experience of two years, begun to share the conviction of his best friends that his ability and temper were not those that fitted him to fill the Speaker's chair. His voice was not melodious, his presence was not imposing, his nervous system was not sufficiently under his control to enable him to wear the aspect of equanimity he did not feel. The House in a boisterous and wayward mood gave little heed to his ruling, and none to

his remonstrance. He gradually shrank from committing himself to decisions which were not certain to be obeyed. He lived in a perpetual fret of misgiving and disappointment, and secretly began to wish that he could escape from a position which, however distinguished and lucrative, he felt that he never could enjoy. Still, it never occurred to any one who remembered his exultation on attaining it, that he would think of retiring before his time; and great was the astonishment of the Premier when, on Christmas eve, Lord J. Russell forwarded to him a letter from the Speaker, complaining that he had not been properly supported in the chair, lamenting that he had lost the confidence of the House, and expressing his determination to resign. Both immediately wrote to him, representing the embarrassment and unfairness of such a step at such a moment, and requesting him to reconsider it:—

> I have little hope, said Melbourne, of shaking his purpose, and if he perseveres in it, what is to be done? If Spring Rice still desires the position, I know not how we can do otherwise than give him all the assistance in our power; but I hope the consideration of the difficulty there would be in filling up his post at the Treasury, will induce him to place himself and his claims in John Russell's hands. But supposing this the case, what is to be done? A country gentleman who would make no vacancy in the Government would be the best, and some have mentioned C. S. Lefevre. John Russell thinks that Cutlar Fergusson would be the best, but I should rather doubt his being induced to undertake it.*

Mr. Abercromby's irritability was soothed, and he consented for a season to resume his presidential functions. The Speaker had suggested several improvements, both in the public and private business of the House, which the greatly increased extent and variety of both rendered desirable.

* From Downing Street, December 26th, 1836.

But ministers, whose attention was absorbed by more urgent matters, did not respond as readily as he expected, and, practically, his proposals were allowed to stand over to a more convenient season. His temper, which by nature was despondent and over-susceptible, chafed at what he took for disrespectful neglect. He had committed himself in private with the leading men on both sides, to the expression of his opinion, that certain changes in the standing orders and the procedure of the House were necessary; and when they were not taken up by Government, he resented what he (probably alone) regarded as humiliating, and as tending to lower his authority in the chair. Hence his offer to resign.

About the middle of January the King caused an intimation to be given to ministers that he did not intend to open Parliament in person, assigning as his reason the illness of the Duchess of Gloucester. He desired that a council should be summoned to meet at Brighton on the 28th instant, to settle the Speech from the Throne; and he wished to have a copy of what was intended three or four days beforehand. The heads of the chief departments were consequently requested to consider the topics to which they respectively wished that the attention of the legislature should be directed:—

> We must begin to think what we shall say. These money affairs may shift their appearance from day to day, but we must take our chance of that and make alterations if they become necessary.*

Whether his Majesty knew that the Opposition designed to move an amendment on the address, impeaching the general conduct of affairs the Premier was possibly not aware; but he could not be mistaken regarding the impression that would be created by the King's absence from town on the occasion, and the public indication thus given of his reluctance to be identified more than he could help with

* From South Street, January 16th, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

the proceedings of his ministers. In the speech from the Throne a settlement of the Irish Municipal question was again brought under the consideration of Parliament; and the newly appointed Attorney-General, Woulffe, a man whose varied culture, knowledge of the world, and philosophic indifference to the heats of party especially commended him to his chief, was charged with the conduct of the Bill. O'Connell, adverting to Lyndhurst's plea in bar of alienage argued that, if it were held good every idea of cementing an incorporate union of the two countries must be abandoned. Stanley rejected his pretension to speak in the name of Ireland, admitted that the old municipalities could no longer be maintained, but deprecated the creation of new ones, which would prove as exclusively Catholic as the existing bodies had been exclusively Protestant. In reply Sheil delivered the greatest of his speeches to a crowded and excited house. He staked the whole issue on the question—were the bulk of the Irish people aliens and to be treated as such by law? As he recalled the memories of common service and suffering in which the two races had struggled and triumphed together against foreign foes, and appealed to the great commander himself if in Europe's greatest agony and peril, "the aliens blenched,"*—he turned and waved his hand to where Lord Lyndhurst and other peers sat under the gallery,—the majority of the audience rose from their seats and betrayed an excitement of feeling unlike anything that has occurred within those walls before or since that day. It is not indeed too much to say that the ill-starred taunt of alienage rendered resistance to the creation of municipal institutions in Ireland eventually unavailing. In the following session the controversy was indeed renewed, but a section of the Conservatives, led by Lord Eliot, seceded from their party on the question, and with some reservations, most of which subsequently were swept away, corporate privileges were in 1840 made the same on both sides of the Channel.

The Primate led the opposition to the Church Rate Bill in

* Hansard, February 23rd, 1837.

a tone of unaccustomed acrimony, which provoked Melbourne into language construed if not intended to be inimical to the church. Bishop Blomfield rejoined, defending his metropolitan and attacking ministers sharply. The new Bishop of Ripon wrote explaining his vote in Opposition, and stating fully the views he entertained on the subject, and was answered by the Premier in a tone equally characteristic and creditable:—

I thank you for your letter. It is consistent with the frankness and integrity of your character, and it is much better to explain differences than to leave them to silent reflection and consequent exaggeration. I have received your communication of course without surprise. Your having been present at the meeting at Lambeth, and your having then sanctioned the unusual course determined upon, was already a sufficient indication of the opinion which you had formed upon the measure which had been opened to the House of Commons. That course was politically the most hostile that could be devised, and being taken without the slightest notice or intimation, was personally neither civil nor considerate. Your lordship was in a new situation on that occasion, and could not, perhaps, be expected to take a prominent part; but I own that I feel hurt that the Bishop of Ely, however he might agree in the general opinion of the meeting, did not object to the hasty and precipitate declaration of that opinion, recommended as I understand upon political grounds, and to which there exist strong objections both of constitutional principle and of general prudence. I do not, of course, concur in your views, either of the principle or of the consequences of the proposed measure, or I should not be found amongst its supporters. The question with me upon this, as upon other measures, is,—is it in itself just and expedient, not by what arguments it is defended, or with what views it is desired. If persons heretofore had suffered themselves to be misled from the contemplation

of the questions themselves, into the ulterior designs and objects of their advocates, no measure of reformation or amelioration would ever have been adopted. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was desired by many of the enemies of religious establishment, and because they thought that their ultimate objects would be advanced by that repeal. The relief of the Roman Catholics was approved by many as being a step to the subversion of the Protestant establishment in Ireland. If you suffer yourself to be deterred from facing the real merits of a subject by the erroneous argnments, or the culpable designs of others, it is at once obvious that you have adopted a line of action which bars all future progress, and precludes every hope of amendment. I am still less able to see how our measure subverts the principle of an established church, or has any tendency to the introduction of what is called the voluntary system. To me it appears to be of quite a different character. You will recollect that what we propose to do here has already been done in Ireland, and I am not prepared to admit that the established Church in that country has been in any degree weakened by that measure. I will fairly say that I do not think it probable that any further pecuniary means for increasing small livings, or giving more effectual religious instruction, are likely, in the present time, to be obtained from Parliament; but I do not see that our measure throws in the way of such any obstacle which did not oppose itself before. If you think that the present law of church rates can be maintained and enforced, and that the evils which attend it are not so great as those which would be consequent upon its repeal, you are of course right in the line which you intend to pursue. If you think that the present law can be modified and changed, so as to render it at once more satisfactory and more effectual, I believe that you deceive yourself. If your conscience disapproves the measure you cannot support it. The disadvantage of your not doing so will fall solely

upon me, who am continually subjected to the reproach of having disposed of more ecclesiastical patronage than any other minister within so short a period, and of having so managed it, as neither to secure one steady personal friend, nor one firm supporter of my own principles and opinions.*

The bishop replied :—

The last paragraph in your letter, my dear lord, has deeply touched me. I know and feel that you have been reproached for what I may be permitted to call the generous and disinterested line of conduct which has led you to extend your patronage to those whose political opinions are not in entire accordance with your own, and that I am at this moment in the enjoyment of comparative ease, affluence and honour by reason of that disinterestedness. This recollection I shall ever be most anxious to cherish, and while it aggravates the regret which I feel at being compelled to differ frou you, it will ever bind me by the strongest ties of personal attachment to one who, in fact, has made so great a sacrifice for my advantage.

The majority of eighty in favour of the Irish Municipal Bill seemed for the moment to reassure ministers and their friends. Melbourne wrote next day :—

I consider the division last night capital, when you think of the combination of prejudice and interest against the measure, upon such a question as the Irish Municipal Bill.†

The Radicals were in better humour with them, and twenty of their immediate connections, who could not bring themselves to vote for the Ballot, agreed to stay away on the division. The projects of opposition failed to realise the anticipations of their promoters. Stanley and Graham

* March 11th, 1837.

† From South Street, March 16th, 1837.

threw themselves heartily, but in vain, into the cause of resistance to concession in Ireland, and O'Connell wrote exultingly, "that the recent division had placed the ministry in an attitude of perfect security. The public sentiment was too powerful to permit their rivals to hope for office upon any other terms than throwing the Orange faction in Ireland overboard, and governing for the benefit of the people. Peel would act on this line of policy, but that he was hampered by his colleagues and supporters." There was much elation at the result. On the other hand the defeat of the British Legion under De Lacy Evans in Spain, and the increasing hostility of the Church and the Court, with the loss of several elections, so disheartened the Home Secretary, that he intimated, in private, his resolution to resign should the Lords throw out the Corporation Bill. Lord Spencer, whose disinterested opinion had more weight with his old colleague than that of any other man, wrote dissuading him from such a step so long as he was supported on the question by a decided preponderance in the Commons. Just then, at a reception of the Order of the Bath, the King took occasion to deliver one of his extra-constitutional orations, with the obvious purpose of letting it be known how intensely he hated his responsible advisers. Lord Aylmer had been recalled from Canada as governor, on the outbreak of the troubles there, but he was to receive the Grand Cross of the Bath as a mark of respect for his past services. When he was introduced his Majesty called on Lord Palmerston and Lord Minto, the only members of the Cabinet who were present, and made them stand one on each side of the new knight, whom he addressed in the most flattering terms, telling him "that he entirely approved of his official conduct, that he acted like a true and loyal subject towards a set of traitors and conspirators, and as became a British officer under the circumstances."

In the money market distrust and difficulty had not abated. Melbourne continued by personal correspondence and intercourse, to watch closely what was going on. Far from shirking

the labour necessarily involved in keeping up a knowledge of details, we find him inviting persons of experience and rectitude, both official and unconnected with office, to communicate with him freely whenever they had anything of importance to state or suggest :—

I have a note from Ellice to say that there is the greatest despair of all these arrangements with the American houses now failing, by the rigour of the Bank in demanding security, and by the doubts of the parties themselves as to their weathering the storm. I have sent to Spearman to come here. Could you do so too before the time.*

There never was such weather for a minister who hated patronage. All the year it had rained garters and crosiers. There had been an epidemic among deans and judges, "and as for the bishops he positively believed they died to vex him." Salisbury being vacant, a clergyman in the diocese of high connections, and well known as a Whig to many leading members of the party, "prayed Lansdowne to speak in favour of his being put forward on the occasion. Strong interests he believed had made Melbourne last year prefer persons to the sees then vacant; two of whom he knew would vote against him." His own fidelity to political ties had been proved to be above temptation. The single-minded simplicity of this appeal, which was duly transmitted to the inexorable dispenser of mitres, was of no avail. Votes were very scarce in the House of Lords, and he had no reason to doubt that as a man of the world, and a man of family, the gentleman would keep his word; but it would not do :

The real reason why I cannot make him is that I find that the appointment would be satisfactory in no point of view except a political one. He came late into the Church, had been in another profession, has kept very

* To F. Baring, from South Street, March 22nd, 1837.

much aloof from the society of clergymen, and in short is not calculated for a bishop in these times. I must tell him this as well as I can; but because I must vex him, I do not see why you should. You had better express yourself towards him as you feel, and throw the whole bother of his not being promoted upon me."*

But Prelates and Knights of the Garter went on dying, and in the midst of weightier affairs he had to balance noble and most noble susceptibilities, and to compare nice shades of theological thought. With the reputation of indifferentism in matters of belief, and for cynical readiness to sacrifice the interest of the Church to those of party, there never was a man who laboured more conscientiously to seek out useful and unobjectionable men for the episcopate, or who was influenced less in his choice by predilections founded on mere coincidences of opinion. He wished to promote tolerant and enlightened men, provided they were faithful and efficient churchmen. In his perplexities he ever sought counsel from the friend in whose temper and discrimination, and high sense of duty, experience had taught him to rely without reserve:—

I learn that Lord Bath is dead. I suppose from what has passed, it will be your opinion that the Duke of Somerset should have the Blue Ribband, and Lord Cork the lieutenancy. Does not Ilchester,† live in Somersetshire, and might he not expect the latter? I shall take no step until I hear from you. Direct to Panshanger, where I am going to-morrow. I suppose the Bishop of Norwich is dead by this time, and although the report with respect to the Bishop of Lichfield was premature, I fear that he cannot last long. Are you still steady for Thirlwall? I fear we shall have a contest about it. I have desired the Bishops of Ely and Chichester to look at his book, and let me know confidentially their opinions upon it. You

* To Lord Lansdowne, from Downing Street, March 2nd, 1837.

† Brother of Lady Lansdowne.

mentioned to me once Mr. Wordsworth, the author of a 'Church History,' and the Bishop of Durham also recommended him. Is he of Oxford or Cambridge? Are his opinions entirely Liberal, and could you learn for us whether he would go with us on the Church rate question? *

The Bishop of Chichester wrote that he found the formation of a just opinion of Thirlwall's book a tougher task, and requiring more labour than he had expected, and that he must therefore take some further time; while the Bishop of Ely came more promptly to a conclusion which was unfavourable to the degree of confidence in his othodoxy which Thirlwall was likely to inspire:—

I fear, said Melbourne, it is the judgment which would be pronounced by many of the impartial and informed. A louder outcry would of course be raised by others. I send you also a letter which I have received from Musgrave† from whom I had wished to learn what was thought at Cambridge, and particularly by Sedgwick. I do not know that upon the whole Mr. Stanley of Alderley would not be the right choice. All that can be said against him is, that he has upon some occasions attended public meetings and spoken at them; but, I have never heard his speeches accused of either violence or impropriety. John Russell is rather for proposing Arnold, but if we propose either Arnold or Thirlwall we run the risk of a rupture‡ upon a church question; and are we justified in doing that? If, on the other hand, we succeed, we succeed by forcing the King against his conscience, which is not desirable, however that conscience may be constituted by ignorance or prejudice. We made him think, and not entirely without reason, that he has great ground of complaint, and we put him out of humour for some months, which,

* From Woburn Abbey, March 29th, 1837.

† Afterwards Archbishop of York. ‡ With the King.

if we are to remain ministers, is neither pleasant or advantageous to the public service; we also greatly offend a large portion of the public, detach from us a certain number of useful supporters, and increase the odium on that point upon which we ought to seek to diminish it; on the other hand we certainly gratify and confirm the largest and most trusty portion of those upon whom we rely.*

Dr. Stanley was appointed Bishop of Norwich; and the historian had to wait some years for promotion. Various judgments may be formed of the decision come to by the Minister; there can be but one regarding his anxiety to do that which was right. In the letter just quoted, some account is given of a consultation at Woburn with Lord John, as to the course to be taken in certain eventualities respecting the Irish Corporation Bill. Having passed the Commons for the second time by a decisive majority, Melbourne thought they must, if they would preserve their characters for independence, refuse to acquiesce quietly, should the Lords reject it on the second reading. This upon the whole he did not anticipate. It was more likely that they would mutilate the measure in Committee, so as to deprive it of all its utility, or defer its consideration until the Tithes Bill was before them with a view to effect a compromise. He was not disposed to submit to either; but in the latter case to "consider it the same as throwing it out, and to say we think this measure ought to pass of itself and upon its own merits, and that it is not dependent upon any other. However, there might be objections to this course, and it was impossible to determine more than the general principles of a line which ought to be taken in circumstances which it was impossible to foresee."

The defeat of Mr. Leader for Westminster, by Sir Francis Burdett, who had withdrawn his support from the Whigs on account of their alliance with Irish Liberals, was hailed by the Opposition as a renewed presage of Ministerial change,

* From Panshanger, April 2nd, 1837.

and even Lord Tavistock was said to have thought that should it occur, and Sir R. Peel resume the reins of Government, he ought to have a fair trial. Yet most of the prophets prophesied falsely. Melbourne said he was not very sorry that Burdett had got in; for that the Ultras were already hard to manage, and that if Leader had won, there would be no doing anything with them. It was sometimes not easy to keep peace between impetuous juniors and complacent seniors in office, whose jealousies were liable to be excited upon occasions, when the co-operation of two departments was indispensable. The President of the Board of Trade, who had been pushed by Althorp, and still more by himself, into a position of prominence he had hardly earned, was quick at work, and eager to display his ability in performing it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was amused at his airs of importance and pretensions to superior economical wisdom, took small pains to conceal that he thought him a bit of a coxcomb. Melbourne thought so too, but he had not quite forgotten the days of his own dandyism; and having a pleasant knack at cutting anybody short who bored him, he contrived to keep his aspiring subordinate in an amicable temper towards himself, without allowing him to overbear the judgment of an older friend. Some difference having arisen regarding a set of minutes to be issued by the Board of Trade, an official letter of the Treasury commenting rather superciliously upon it, was sent to the First Lord for his sanction; here is his private note to Spring Rice on the subject:—

> Thomson has been with me this morning, very anxious and a little lively about these minutes. I think it will be best to have the matter out at once, therefore let me have them with your remarks, and I will talk to you again upon it, and consider how best to manage the affair.*

He was much as ever at Holland House, where he delighted to talk over foreign politics with my Lord; bygone beauties

* From South Street, May 13th, 1837.

and forgotten fashions with my Lady; etymologies with Bobus Smith; and ecclesiastical controversies with Allen. To an idle man like Greville,* the variety of his reading was surprising. He would battle about the origin of an idiom, and quote Latin or English verse, without hitch or pause, to make good his point, reciting the chief passages with emphasis, and not unfrequently with gesticulation. Then he and his hostess would squabble about the true motive of what somebody was saying or doing; both of them indulging in vivacity of caricature, and talk-etchings of personal traits, which nobody else would think of venturing on. Frequently he stayed for a night rather than incur the dreariness of the drive into town; and then he had the enjoyment of discussing letters of importance next morning with his host, in whom, though he did not always agree with him, his affectionate confidence was unreserved.

The King had directed a Council to be summoned for the 30th of May; it was proposed that but few of the Cabinet should attend. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was one of those who wished to be excused on account of other engagements. Melbourne expressed his regret that he had not known of it sooner, as he might have provided otherwise, but on the evening of the 29th it was too late:—

> We shall not be enough without you. I have a letter to-day to say the King is better, and has been improving through the day. He begs that those who come will suit their inclination about dining and sleeping there; but I think that, as he is ill, we had better return. You will be back easily to dine with Northampton; we lunch at three.†

During the fortnight that ensued his Majesty grew daily worse; and the physicians did not disguise their fear that the vital energies were rapidly giving way. On the 14th of June the First Minister, in a confidential note, reminded his colleague the Lord President that:—

> In case anything should happen suddenly, the House of

* 'Journal.' † From South Street, May 29th, 1837.

Lords must assemble immediately; and there must forthwith be a Privy Council. I have commands, as soon as the event happens, to attend immediately upon the Princess at Kensington, so that I must trouble you to go to the House of Lords, and take care that all is done as upon the last occasion. I have ascertained that it is wished that the Council should take place at Kensington.*

I have received a letter from Taylor, saying that the Queen is anxious that the recovery of the King should be prayed for in the churches, on Sunday next. I do not know whether the Council Office has anything to do with this. I will write to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is very doubtful whether the King will survive long, but the order may as well be given.†

On the evening of the same day he wrote:—

The report this morning from Windsor is that there is a mitigation of the more painful symptoms, such as cough, difficulty of breathing; and though there is no essential amendment, the King is more comfortable. I send you a sketch of what I propose the Princess should say to the Council, with Palmerston's observations. Let me know what you think. John Russell suggests that it would be better and quieter altogether that the Council should be held at Kensington. I suppose there is no objection. I will try and ascertain the Princess's feeling.‡

A few days before the death of William IV., when his condition was understood to be hopeless, Sir Robert Peel is known to have expressed in private, but without reserve, his opinion that it was both expedient and right that the young Queen should retain Melbourne as her chief minister, and confide frankly in the loyalty of his counsel at the outset of her reign. The two preceding sovereigns had retained the

* To Lord Lansdowne.

† June 15th, 1837. ‡ Idem.

Ministers they had found in office at their accessions;—precedents which public opinion approved.

The Duke of Wellington expressed a decided opinion, during the King's illness, that the First Minister ought to be in communication with the heiress to the throne. When George IV. was dying, he had sent authentic intelligence every day to the Duke of Clarence; and for many reasons of state, it was desirable that the Princess Victoria should be prepared for the event which at any hour might happen. Melbourne had already acted in accordance with this view; and, without forestalling in any way the decision which the Sovereign expectant might form regarding those to whom she might eventually look for advice, he took care that the important contingency should in every respect be provided for in the most suitable manner. But with a true sense of delicacy, he scrupulously forbore from all appearance of endeavouring to ingratiate himself beforehand; and as a matter of fact the Princess had never, upon any occasion, conversed with him on any subject of importance before her accession to the throne:—

June 20th,
Twenty minutes to 7 A.M.

I have just received the intelligence of the death of the King, which took place at twelve minutes past two this morning.*

* To Lord Lansdowne, June 20th, 1837.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUEEN VICTORIA.

Accession of the Queen—The Household—General Election—Civil list—Attacks of Brougham—Coronation.

Lord Conyngham left Windsor at daybreak on the morning of the 20th of June, bearing the tidings of her accession to the youthful Queen. Melbourne was soon after in attendance to explain the forms of the initiatory ceremonial and to submit the terms of the speech in which her Majesty was to assume the rights and dignities of empire. His first act on returning home was to communicate with Lord Lansdowne:—

I have seen the Queen; nothing could be more proper and feeling than her behaviour. She declared her intention of keeping everything as it is, but has left all business until after the Council. One thing, however, she mentioned which I think it well to tell you of. She wishes Lady Lansdowne to be her principal lady. I told her there could not be a better choice, but that I very much feared that Lady Lansdowne would be unwilling to undertake it. I say nothing more from myself than that her doing so would be in the highest degree advantageous.

P.S. Understanding that the Duke of Wellington put on deepest clothes upon the last occasion I have done so; but I think nobody else need.*

The Privy Council assembled at Kensington at eleven o'clock;

* To Lord Lansdowne, June 20th, 1837.

the princes of the blood, the heads of the church and the law, all the great officers of state and those who had preceded them in office. The Lord President having announced the demise of the crown stated that it was their first duty formally to acquaint the new sovereign with the fact; and upon her taking the oaths prescribed by law, to do homage and proclaim her Queen. The Dukes of Cumberland and Sussex, the two Archbishops, the Lord Chancellor, and the Premier quitted the Council Chamber and presented themselves to her Majesty, who received them alone. On their return the doors were opened, and the Queen, attired in simple mourning, advanced and bowing to those present took her seat at the council board, the inaugural ceremonies were then proceeded with, according to the usages on such occasions, the Royal Princess being the first to swear obedience and kiss hands on bended knee. According to the rule observed on such occasions, the new sovereign had in set form to declare who should be President of the reconstituted Privy Council. Mr. Greville had omitted to prepare the form in writing for her Majesty, under the impression that it was superfluous. His colleague, Mr. Bathhurst, was of a different opinion; and Lord Lansdowne, who was to be reappointed, insisted on the paper being duly inscribed with the words, "I declare," &c., and placed in the hands of the Queen.* He requested Spring Rice to look at the precedents, and draw the address to be presented the following day; also the Royal answer to the condolence and congratulation.† In all the arrangements he was required to advise upon, regarding the formation of the Royal household, Melbourne appears to have taken counsel with the Lord President, in whose habits and ways of life splendid tastes were happily combined with dislike of ostentation.

It is very necessary that some of the situations in the

* Greville gives a different version of the incident, but the above is the correct one.

† Note from South Street, June 22nd, 1837.

Queen's household, such as some of her ladies and the privy purse, should be settled without further delay. It appears by Chamberlayne's 'Present State of England,' which is the only authority we can as yet find upon the subject, that Queen Anne had a Privy Purse, a Groom of the Stole, a first Lady of the Bedchamber, and ten other Ladies of the Bedchamber. The Queen thinks that such an establishment of ladies would at present be unnecessarily large, and she is disposed to think that the establishment of Queen Consort would be sufficient for her, viz.—one Mistress of the Robes, and six Ladies in Waiting. I told her what you desired me upon the part of Lady Lansdowne, and she was much gratified by it. If Lady Lansdowne thinks herself not equal in point of health to be the Mistress of the Robes, could she in the first instance take that of the first Lady in Waiting, with the understanding that she should be allowed to spare herself; for instance some other lady might be got to take the waitings at the first drawing rooms.*

In the course of the afternoon the Marquis was thrown from his horse, and sustained a shock which for an hour or two occasioned some uneasiness; he soon rallied, however, and next day was able to attend business as usual.

I was very sorry to receive your note yesterday, and am anxious to hear that you are as well this morning as you expected that you should be. The shake which accompanies a fall from a horse is not always at our age so easily got rid of. I saw the Queen last night, and the arrangement which she seems to approve is, that if Lady Lansdowne will take the situation of First Lady in Waiting with the understanding that she is not to give any formal attendance, she would then appoint a Mistress of the Robes, a first lady in waiting and six other ladies for the ordinary duty. She is desirous that the Duchess of Sutherland should be the Mistress of the Robes if she will

* To Lord Lansdowne, June 22nd, 1837.

undertake it. Lady Tavistock will be one of her Ladies—Lady Rosebery, I am sorry to say, declines. If this arrangement will suit Lady Lansdowne I will write to the Duchess of Sutherland.*

The Queen is desirous of knowing what arrangement is to be made respecting money for her own immediate private expenses. I have requested her Majesty to consult you upon the subject, and I have sent you a letter which her Majesty has received from Messrs. Coutts.†

The Duke of Kent and other members of the royal family having honoured them by making them their bankers, Sir Coutts Trotter, in the name of the firm, respectfully desired to place their funds at the disposition of her Majesty, during the interval that must elapse before the arrangement of the new civil list should be made; and gave expression to the pride they would feel in being permitted to render any service to the Queen.

The ceremonials and changes incident to the accession being over, it was agreed on all hands that legislative business should as speedily as possible be brought to a close, questions in controversy being allowed to stand adjourned for the decision of the new parliament. The Queen dowager quitted Windsor a few days after the funeral of her Royal Consort, and his fair and youthful successor fixed her residence there early in July.

Just forty years before, when advocating a comprehensive policy of conciliation in Ireland, Fox had urged "that the whole people of that country ought to have the same privileges, the same system, the same operation of Government; and that all classes should have the same chances of emolument: in other words, that the Irish Government should be regulated by Irish notions and Irish prejudices; being convinced that the more Ireland was under Irish

* June 23rd, 1837.

† From South Street, June 24th, 1837, to T. S. Rice.

Government, the more she would be bound to English interests." Melbourne and Holland had not forgotten the maxims they had learned in youth from the lips of their master—maxims which had been recently relied on as the best authority in legislative debate by his younger, but not less devoted disciple Lord J. Russell.* And now at last the time was come to act upon them.

One of the first administrative acts of the new reign was a letter publicly addressed by the Home Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, commending the spirit in which he had theretofore conducted the Government, and, by command of the Queen, making known her earnest desire "to see her Irish subjects in the full enjoyment of that civil and political equality, to which, by a recent statute, they were entitled; and that she was convinced, that when invidious distinctions were altogether obliterated, her throne would be more secure, and her people more truly united."

A rumour had been for some days in circulation that Baron Stockmar, well known as the confidential friend of Prince Leopold in this country, was appointed private secretary to the Queen. Writing confidentially to a colleague Melbourne observed, "There is, of course, no truth in Stockmar's appointment. It should be quietly contradicted."† It was indeed one of the difficulties of the situation that no one could be named who seemed in all respects eligible for an office at once so peculiar and so responsible. The names of more than one individual well-connected and of high attainments were suggested, but for various reasons they were all in turn laid aside, and Melbourne himself undertook for a time to perform that portion of the duties of private secretary to the sovereign which related to public affairs. No person in the realm possessed in so high a degree the combination of experience, tact, and discretion that were requisite for such a post; and his

* Hansard. Irish Municipal Bill, February 7th, 1837.

† From Windsor Castle, August 31st, 1837.

readiness and assiduity in adding its labours to those incidental to the first office in the state, earned for him the highest praise from the illustrious personage for whose sake he undertook their performance. The Duke of Wellington's testimony on this subject cannot be omitted here :—

I am willing to admit that the noble viscount has rendered the greatest possible service to her Majesty. I happen to know that it is Her Majesty's opinion that the noble viscount has rendered Her Majesty the greatest possible service, making her acquainted with the mode and policy of the Government of this country, initiating her into the laws and spirit of the constitution, independently of the performance of his duty as the servant of Her Majesty's crown ; teaching her, in short, to preside over the destinies of this great country."*

Towards the end of August, the King and Queen of the Belgians were expected at Windsor, and Her Majesty desired that Lord and Lady Lansdowne should be of the guests invited to meet them. But the royal wishes were expressed with gentle consideration for their late bereavement in the loss of their eldest son :—

The Queen fears very much such an invitation should annoy and derange, especially in a moment of domestic affliction. I have therefore undertaken to ascertain your feelings upon the subject. If Lady Lansdowne should feel herself equal to the exertion, or if you should be willing to come alone, it will give great pleasure. If not, let it be considered that nothing has passed upon the subject.†

The Queen is much pleased that you and Lady Lansdowne will come to Windsor. She does not wish to constrain you at all, but, if not inconvenient, would wish you to stay from Tuesday the 29th, until the following Tuesday. You give a very true account of the state of the country,

* Speech in the House of Lords, August 24th, 1841.

† From Downing Street, August 27th.

and also of the state of feeling in it. The differences, I am afraid, are not the less violent because there is little to differ about. I am afraid there is little hope of Sefton's recovery. He may rally, but from what Copeland tells me I much fear that the probability is the other way.*

During his absence from town, Lord Palmerston resolved to send a friendly force to Oporto; and the case being urgent he obtained the consent for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide the necessary funds, without waiting to consult the Cabinet. From Brocket Melbourne signified his entire approval of what had been done, adding that "he had long been dreadfully uneasy about Portugal." †

A project was prepared at the Treasury, upon the accession of the Queen, for the reform and better management of the Crown estates in Lancashire and Cornwall. A number of old abuses would thereby have been got rid of, and a certain saving effected for the benefit of the Exchequer. To the logic and arithmetic of the plan no exceptions could be taken; but the Premier hesitated upon other grounds:—

The question of the Duchies is a very material one, and one of great delicacy, and which appears to me to require to be treated with much caution. It is very material in itself, and as far as it relates to the administration of the property. Wherever you meddle with these ancient rights and jurisdictions, it appears to me that, for the sake of remedying a few comparatively insignificant abuses, you create many new inconveniences, and always produce considerable discontent. But the general question appears to me still more important when considered with reference to the present House of Commons, and the tone and temper of the elections. It is confessed upon all hands that by the Church-rate measure we have raised against ourselves, a strong and effectual Church cry.

* August 21st, 1837.

† From Brocket, August 24th, 1837.

Let us take care that we do not add a prerogative cry. The Church alone is nearly too much for us; Church and Crown would be so at once, and if this tone should be taken we shall give the House of Commons an easy opportunity of acting at once against us. The progress of public opinion, and the anxiety for economy and reform, furnish no safeguard against this. Public opinion does make a progress, but it is not by a steady onward course. It is like the tide, it comes on with great violence and then recedes as violently in an opposite direction. It gains ground perhaps with every wave, but it is far from always keeping the ground which it temporarily occupies. The fault of our Church-rate measure was that the grievance to be removed was one almost entirely of principle. It was in very few places a real burthen. The same is still more true of the Duchies: few except their inhabitants know of their existence, and none feel any inconvenience from them, or would receive any benefit from their reformation.*

His stay at Windsor was necessarily continued during the autumn, and his interchange of views with members of the Cabinet remaining in town, was more frequently than heretofore in writing. A note from Lady Holland, having mentioned incidentally that Spring Rice expected him next day in London, he wrote to say he had no intention of coming up yet:—

The Queen told me to-day that she expected you to come down before going to Ireland; if you do, we can have our conversation here as well as in London.†

The result of the general election was unfavourable to ministers in England, but in Scotland their friends were almost everywhere successful; and in Ireland, out of 105, forty-three Protestants and twenty-nine Catholics, forget-

* From Windsor Castle, August 30th, 1837.

† From Windsor Castle, September 2nd, 1837.

ful of past differences, were cordially ministerial. In the new Parliament the Treasury whip felt secure of a good working majority on party questions. Mr. Abercromby, being re-elected for Edinburgh, was regarded as certain to be again chosen Speaker; but as an act of courtesy to the Leader of Opposition, Lord J. Russell wrote acquainting him with the ministerial intention, and inquiring if any rival candidate were likely to be named. Sir Robert Peel replied that on the last occasion he had not been allowed to replace Mr. Manners Sutton in the chair; and that consequently he did not feel called upon to answer the question. The Home Secretary inclosed his note without any comment to the Premier, who returned it with the minute, "Peel is a bad horse to go up to in the stable." A letter of O'Connell's from Derrynane to the people of Ireland abounded in expressions of devotion to the youthful Queen and praise of the administration, whose conduct of Irish affairs was contrasted invidiously with that of Earl Grey. Melbourne was not so dazzled with the novelty of his new position as Premier by the confidence of the Commons, and the choice of the Crown, as to misread the tendency of such laudation. He knew the value of O'Connell's support, but he could not forget what it cost. And speaking without reserve to one whom he could implicitly trust he said, "His love is only less injurious than his enmity. Such letters from him do us harm in England, I know not whether they do us good in Ireland. Strong as we are, we are not so superdamnably strong as to insult Grey, Anglesey, and Stanley, as he does in one and the same paragraph." Nor was he unforethoughtful of the effect likely to be be produced by the disclosure he knew to be impending of a serious falling off in the receipt of the Excise and Customs consequent upon the recent shocks to commercial credit and the diminished employment of labour :—

> The time is not far off, he wrote the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the state of the revenue will be declared.

I think every fair means should be taken to counteract the apprehension which will be produced by the amount of defalcations which will appear on the face of the account. You have, of course, not omitted this from your consideration, but I think it as well to mention it. There should be no deceit nor concealment, but what can be, should be accounted for.*

Some days later he observed :—

I do not fear the impression of the announcement of the quarter's revenue upon the minds of any who have the least information or understanding of the subject, but these are very few indeed. Very few look to the account of the whole year, and the generality consider the relative deficiency of the quarter as an absolute deficiency as compared with the charge. A little popular and common explanation is, therefore, I think, useful. I always think that we are too much inclined to consider the Bank. We hold them to be an independent trading company, bound to take care of their own interests without reference to the Government, and there is great use and advantage in this arrangement. But then we must expect them to act in this capacity, and I do not see, except in confidence, that they are bound to make the Government acquainted with their intentions and operations. As bankers they will be anxious to do as much business as they can, and it will, of course, diminish their own trade, if they suffer others to discount at a lower rate. Their mismanaging their own affairs is a contingency that may happen, and of which we must suffer the consequences.†

Lord J. Russell and Spring Rice equally sought to impress their colleagues with the conviction that no more time should be suffered to elapse without attempting the introduction of a legal provision for the poor in Ireland.

* From Windsor Castle, September 10th, 1837.

† From Windsor Castle, September 21st, 1837.

They differed in their views of the mode in which this should be done, the former setting a high value on the political advantage of using the opportunity to establish identical institutions in the two countries, the latter believing that their social plight and need admitted not practically of such identification. About the right and duty of laying the permanent burthen of relief upon the owners of real property there was a general concurrence of opinion. Even in Ireland, few persons of influence or judgment gave heed to O'Connell's objections, which were rather sentimental than sustainable in argument. But philanthropic feeling and territorial fear combined in deprecating the attempt to deal with the surplus population, who had been suffered to multiply and grow more miserable for generations, by the application of the method enforced with so much difficulty even in opulent England, under the recent Poor Law Amendment Act. The country, it was said, must be studded all over with workhouses at an enormous cost, if the destitute were to be provided with in-door relief during half the year. The charge for such establishments would prove a crushing weight on industry and enterprise, already too depressed; and the reproductive employment of labour in better tillage and further reclamation of the soil would be retarded instead of being stimulated. The helpless through orphanhood, sickness, or age were universally admitted to have an indefeasible claim to relief; but, if the right of the able-bodied out of employment were legally admitted, what would become of rents and profits? The section of economists led by Colonel Torrens advocated systematic emigration in preference to either parochial employment or imprisonment. But Canada was still disquieted by colonial disaffection, Australia was, in popular imagination, but a land of convicts, and New Zealand was still but the hunting-ground of the Maori race. If anything was to be accomplished towards putting an end to the reproach of perennial destitution, a poor law of one sort or another must be tried. Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Cornewall Lewis, who had been engaged

in the exhaustive inquiry into the condition of the Irish poor in 1834, suggested that one of the permanent English commissioners who then sat at Somerset House to administer the New Poor Law, should be sent to Ireland to judge and advise what should be the form of the contemplated experiment, and to estimate its necessary cost. To this Melbourne agreed, though not without migivings as to the foregone conclusions and possible errors of bureaucratic dogmatism. Mr. Nicholls, having finished his bird's-eye glance at Irish polity, returned full of confidence that he had mastered the whole nature of the disease, and could prescribe unerringly an adequate cure. His memorable report—memorable, as was afterwards bitterly said, in the sense that it would be well if it could be utterly forgotten—won the approval of his colleagues in the Poor Law Commission; and Mr. Lewis having been asked to give his opinion confidentially upon its proposals, furnished the Home Secretary with a summary of arguments in its favour so cogent and plausible that Lord J. Russell desired to have them submitted to the Lord President with a view to the preparation of a Bill in the ensuing Session. Aware of the strength of the objections which, irrespective of class and party were entertained to the project, and by none more deeply than by influential members of the Cabinet, it was suggested that it should be legislatively dealt with as an experiment for five years only. In transmitting Mr. Nicholls' recommendations, Melbourne observed:—

> That though in order to facilitate passing a Bill through Parliament it is often necessary to make it temporary, if the bill be in the main good, this is a very bad arrangement. It brings the matter under the reconsideration of Parliament, perhaps at a very inconvenient moment, it is far better to make the Act permanent and amend it.*

The counter-scheme of Archbishop Whately and the Chief Remembrancer Blake did not commend itself as sufficiently

* From Windsor Castle, September 28th, 1837.

practical and unobjectionable to his mind; and with many a shrug and sigh and exclamation of wonder, that Lansdowne and Rice, who ought to know what should be done, did not offer anything better, he assented in Cabinet to the strange scheme of cutting up Ireland into eighty unions, and setting up in each an expensive machinery for the useless employment of waste labour.

Many letters at this period relate to the details of the Civil List, which the new Parliament would be asked to vote on its re-assembling. The First Lord of the Treasury sifted every detail thoroughly of the expenditure in former reigns, and weighed for himself the comparative circumstances in past and present times, which required or justified deviation from precedent. Lord Spencer, who was consulted on the subject as the highest economic authority among the Whigs, wrote unreservedly recommending that the new establishment should be formed on a generous and ungrudging scale. Engaged himself in applying principles almost of parsimony to the retrieving of his family estates from embarrassment, he saw the political wisdom of leading the nation to confide at the outset of the new reign in their youthful sovereign, and the policy as well as propriety of providing such an income as would take away all excuse in future for the contracting of royal debt. Fortified by such authority, and completely master of the history of the subject, Melbourne made up his mind to propose to Parliament a provision for Her Majesty considerably larger than that which had been agreed to in the previous reign. And he prayed Spring Rice when the Cabinet met in November, to "come prepared to act boldly and liberally, and by no means to fiddle upon small points, and about petty salaries,"* and so it was done accordingly. The ultra economists railed at the extravagance, pointed to the prevalent distress, and asked why was this waste, and wherefore the money was not given to the poor. Spring Rice had to endure the brunt and bear

* From Brighton, October 21st, 1837.

the blame. And unluckily for him, he had a plucky but imprudent way of smiling provokingly at taunts he felt to be unjust; and what he used to call turning the tables upon his accusers by showing up some inconsistency of theirs. But this mode of warfare with deputations to the Treasury or opponents in committee of supply, however amusing to lookers on, does not pay. In the long run the pugnacious minister gets the worst of it. His hard hits may be laughed at and cheered at the time; but they accumulate at last until his influence is stoned with stones till it dies.

Far removed from the stir and din of public life, the career of the Minister had anxiously been watched, and his success affectionately triumphed in, by the last of those who could recall the days when he was the favourite child of Melbourne House. The aged Lord of Petworth had survived nearly all who in the days of Conway, Reynolds, and Horace Walpole, had mingled in the festive throng. Like many who then were Whigs, he had become Conservative; and at times he would gravely banter William (as to the end he loved to call him) on his flirtations with Radicalism. But his interest never flagged in the political changes in which he was concerned. Melbourne was seldom long without paying him a visit; and never ceased to delight in his original and suggestive conversation. When Lord Egremont believed his end approaching, he sent for him. He was in full possession of his faculties, and talked, as if done with life, of the condition of the country, and what he deemed the tendency of things. Looking at the timepiece, he said:—

> William, I have lived long enough to see the hand go round. In the first quarter of my time the world was nothing but profligate; in the next there came a great revival of puritanism; then came another spell of luxury and license; and now you have a revival of religion once more.

He was always much delighted with Melbourne's success, and troubled himself little about difference of politics; "his

only blunder that he could never understand was his mad choice of a wife." "I always thought he had better judgment and taste." But as he wrote who knew her best: "though her countenance had no other beauty than expression, that charm it possessed in a singular degree. Her manners, though eccentric, and apparently not really affected, had a fascination which it is difficult for any who never encountered their effect to conceive. Her ordinary conversation was playful and animated, pregnant with humour and vivacity, and remarkable for the common sense of the opinions it expressed. She was indeed wiser for others than for herself, and she who disdained all worldly advice was the most judicious of worldly advisers." Lord Egremont died on the 11th of November in his 85th year.

Some time before Parliament met the Duke of Sussex wrote, offering to move the Address in the Peers: whereon Melbourne observed: "As he offers it is difficult if not impossible to decline, and though I perceive some objections, they are not of very great importance. What do you think? The Duke is very anxious that this should be kept quite secret at present."* The Queen's uncle had, after all, a stronger claim than most of the ministerial peers to have his wishes considered. He had been through life more constant than any of his brothers, except the Duke of Kent, in fidelity to the principles of civil and religious liberty; and his speech on the first day of the Session was judiciously conceived and very well delivered.

Brougham still sat on the ministerial side. In a splenetic speech, he denounced as extravagant the grant of thirty thousand a year to the Duchess of Kent, whom, by a strange inaccuracy, he designated as the "Queen-Mother." Melbourne corrected him by interjaculating the "Mother of the Queen." Stung at being caught in a blunder, and glad of an excuse for assailing his courtly foe, Brougham fiercely rejoined:—

I admit my noble friend is right. On a point of this sort I

* To Lord Lansdowne, from Windsor Castle, September 28th, 1837.

humble myself before my noble friend. I have no courtier-like cultivation. I am rude of speech. The tongue of my noble friend is so well hung, and so well attuned to courtly airs, that I cannot compete with him for the prize which he is now so eagerly struggling to win. Not being given to glozing and flattery, I may say that the Duchess of Kent (whether to be called queen-mother or mother of the queen) is nearly connected with the throne; and a plain man like myself, having no motive but to do my duty, may be permitted to surmise that any additional provision for her might possibly come from the Civil List, which you have so lavishly voted.

The Premier repelled this attack by reminding the House of a not unimportant difference between the Queen-Dowager and a Princess who had never worn the Crown. What was meant by attributing to him a tongue well hung he could not tell; but one more skilful in egregious flattery than that of the noble and learned Lord he had never known.

Out of the Privy purse Melbourne made up his mind, after much consideration, to recommend Her Majesty to grant to the members of the family of Fitz Clarence the same allowances which they had enjoyed during the lifetime of their father. It would, he said, "be kind, it would be generous, and it would be conclusive. No further demand could be made after the Queen had given them as much as the late King."*

Christmas brought no holiday time. Lansdowne, who had gone to Bowood, advised by letter certain measures with respect to Canada in conformity with the conciliatory assurances in the Maiden Speech from the Throne; and these were laid before a meeting of the Cabinet on the 26th of December. Other views were, however, strongly pressed, and Melbourne wrote reluctantly urging the return of his friend to town.†

* From South Street, December 5th, 1837.

† From Downing Street, December 26th, 1837, and January 1st, 1838.

A profound feeling of personal respect for the illustrious commander who led the Opposition in the Lords, combined with a sense of the supreme value to be attached to his opinions on all questions connected with the army, led him often to consult the Duke while measures were under consideration; and he never failed to do so in the most deferential and persuasive terms.

My Lord Duke,

I beg leave to submit to your Grace a copy of a proposed order in Council, which has been drawn up for the purpose of carrying into effect some of the most material of the recommendations of the report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the civil administration of the army. Notwithstanding the benefit which must be derived from your Grace's long experience, and great authority upon this subject, I should not have ventured to take this liberty if I had not felt assured of your Grace's anxiety upon all occasions to afford to the Government of the country all the information and assistance in your power. Neither should I have done this if the matter had not been as yet pending and undecided, nor if I had been able to find in your Grace's evidence given before the commissioners, any distinct opinion given upon the parts which are the subject of this proposed order. Lord Hill has put me in possession of your Grace's memorandum upon this report, but perhaps, considering the importance of the subject, your Grace may be desirous of another, explaining, enforcing and adding to the opinions which are expressed in that paper.—I have the honour, &c.*

The Duke replied on the 4th, courteously and frankly stating his general views, and where he thought the minute might be modified with advantage.

The Premier wrote again to the Duke informing him some days beforehand "that it was the intention to proceed

* From Downing Street, January 1st, 1838.

in both Houses by Address on the papers already presented regarding Canada. Lord John would move the Address in the House of Commons on the Tuesday following, having given notice to that effect, and Lord Glenelg would on the same day make a general statement in the House of Lords, and give notice of moving the address on Thursday." *

Sheil, notwithstanding his brilliant successes in debate, remained without any acknowledgment of his services until January, when the commissionership of Greenwich Hospital became vacant. It was supposed to be a permanent office of £600 a year with a retiring pension of half that sum. The Premier sent for him and asked if he would accept it. "If the holder be irremovable, I am willing to do so," said the orator, "though certainly the emolument is not splendid." Melbourne rejoined with a laugh that for life £600 a year was not a bad thing; and that he had known more than one man of repute in Parliament who contrived to live on a good deal less. When Parliament met in February a new writ was issued for Tipperary, and Sheil was re-elected without opposition. But doubts having been raised as to whether an office whose acceptance vacated the seat could be considered permanent, Sir Robert Peel intimated in the House that should a change of ministry occur he did not think that it would be so regarded.

Brougham no longer lingered in Westmoreland as during the Session of 1836, nor as in 1837 observed an armed neutrality in public affairs. Meanwhile, Lyndhurst and he had been reconciled, and remained ever after on friendly and even intimate terms. Towards many of his old allies he continued to profess unaltered sentiments of regard; but to Melbourne there was nothing due or to be given but condign punishment for what he called his treachery; one aggravation of offence not to be forgiven lay, as he loved to tell, in the Premier's having written to him about the Imprisonment for Debt Bill and other measures, in his accustomed free and easy tone, without dropping the least

* From Downing Street, January 13th, 1838.

hint of the judicial affront in contemplation. Had he been treated confidentially and told that the whole blame lay with the King, he would have pitied the infirmity of friendship, but would not have felt himself outwitted. But on the demise of the Crown and the accession of Melbourne to the hitherto untasted power which the full confidence of royalty confers, the last shade of doubtful extenuation vanished, and the unhappy egotist was forced to see plainly that he had been laid aside by his party rather than by royalty. Thenceforth his thoughts were devoted to the vindication of his rejected claims and vengeance on his chief adversary. The public were never told directly at the time what were the reasons that he was not a second time made Keeper of the Seal; and other causes which appeared to be too obvious were never authentically denied. He was held up as a victim to the enmity and resentment of the Court; and sometimes as the hated and envied rival, whom the Whigs of inferior talent feared to admit once more within the pale of power. But on the fall of Sir Robert Peel's short administration, the Court was absolutely helpless; while the new Cabinet stood in the utmost need of some one able to cope with Lord Lyndhurst; yet for several months there was no one whom they ventured to name as a fit occupant of the Woolsack. Now they could no longer deceive themselves into hoping for any quarter from the eloquent and exasperated subject of official ostracism. Furious at the conspicuous slight put upon him, Brougham lost no more time in reminding them what manner of spirit he was of. Day after day he poured forth upon them the unfailing vials of his wrath. Ireland, Canada, and the West Indies furnished him in succession with themes of invective against what he stigmatised as their maladministration; while, for popularity in England, he was ready to outbid them easily on education, free trade, and law reform. Had the objections to his readmission to the Cabinet rested on the antipathy of the King, they would have been removed by his demise in 1837; had they been

entertained only by the Premier they must evidently have been overborne by the more placable views of his colleagues, as time wore on, and the ministerial majority, small enough at first, grew less and less. The truth is, however, that what their chief had the courage and candour to declare at starting, they were, or soon came to be convinced of with regard to this most eccentric though most eloquent of men. To one of his memorable onslaughts, Melbourne thus commenced his reply :—

I appeal to the candour of every one who has listened to the marvellous display of ingenuity in argument and versatility of illustration, with which we have been favoured by the noble and learned Lord, whether the reasons must not have been perfectly insuperable which compelled us to forego the advantage of including him in the administration.

Melbourne invited the Duke of Wellington to occupy the first place in the Commission to inquire into army promotion. His reply is characteristic :—

My Lord,

I have received your letter of last night. I am very unwilling to decline to give my assistance in the proposed inquiry. But it is a very serious affair to undertake, without knowing who are to be the members of the Commission. I request you to let me know the names of the officers and gentlemen whose nomination is in contemplation.*

The Premier was so fortunate as to be able soon afterwards to send a reply which was deemed satisfactory :—

My Lord Duke,

I beg leave to transmit to your Grace a list of the proposed members of the Commission upon naval and military

* From Apsley House, March 15th, 1838.

promotion. I believe they have all been already named to Your Grace, except Sir Richard Williams. I have received the assent of them all, except Sir H. Vivian and Sir A. Dickson, the former of whom is at a distance in the country. As soon as I receive the replies of these gentlemen, I shall direct the Commission to be made out for Her Majesty's signature.*—I remain, my Lord Duke, your Grace's faithful and obedient servant, &c.

Two days after the unwearied man of all public work, rejoined—

My Lord,

I have had the honour of receiving your letter of the 19th. I shall be prepared to attend whenever your Lordship proposes that the intended Commission should commence its inquiry. I heard from Lord Melville that he will be in town early in May. It is desirable that the Commissioners should sit, so as to consider the matter referred to them, during his Lordship's stay in London.†

Besides those already named, the Commission consisted of the Duke of Richmond, Earl of Minto, Lord Hill, Viscount Howick, Mr. Labouchere, Sir Charles Adam, Sir James Kempt, Sir T. M. Hardy, Sir George Cockburn, Sir Henry Hardinge. Then followed a note from the Minister, saying, that he had acted on the suggestion for an early meeting of the Commission, and had named Mr. Colling, of the War Office, Secretary.‡

With good taste, and true tact, everything like compliment or favour is omitted in this correspondence. It was a great object with the Minister to get the Duke to act; but he understood the man, and felt that he would be all the more gratified at being asked respectfully, on public grounds alone,

* From Windsor Castle, April 19th, 1838.
† From Strathfieldsaye, April 21st, 1838.
‡ From South Street, April 29th, 1838.

and as being above the notion of taking trouble to put an obligation on political opponents. On his own side Melbourne was scrupulous to keep clear of all such obligation; but he did not feel it to be any compromise of the dignity of his office to tell the great soldier by implication, that in taking thought for defence of the realm, his counsel was indispensable. How indispensable the Duke considered himself in matters of a different kind, may be seen by a note, meant to be friendly, which he sent to the minister, very soon afterwards:—

I am very sorry to inform you that I am unable to attend the discussion of the second reading of the Irish Poor Bill, this day. In truth, I am at present so deaf as to be unable to hear anything. I recommend to you to postpone the second reading to some future day. I don't think that the House in general will like to agree to allow the second reading of the Bill *pro formâ*, and postpone the discussion to a future stage. You will have a discussion, therefore, if not a serious opposition upon the second reading, if not postponed, and further upon a future day, and your difficulties in passing the Bill will be increased.*

Both sides were weary of the struggle about the payment of Irish tithes. The duty of the reappropriation of church property by Parliament had been the watchword of liberalism in 1835, and was still reiterated as a point of honour. But of its successful assertion in legislative enactment, no longer any hope remained; and if without actual renunciation its adjournment *sine die* would secure municipal franchises and rights for the remaining third of the realm still kept waiting for them, would not the concession be well worth making? Several intimations on the other hand had been thrown out by persons of weight in Opposition, that some compromise of the kind would not be refused. It took many conferences, and much correspondence to bring Government and their supporters generally, to agree to the sacrifice of feeling

* From Apsley House, May 14th, 1838.

involved; but the continued loss and injury inflicted by the prolongation of the tithe war on the farming classes throughout three provinces of Ireland overbore party scruples: and, without objection, save from a handful of English Radicals, who were all for abiding by the fruitless theory, regardless of suffering, which they or their constituents did not feel, a Bill was brought in by Lord Morpeth, providing for the conversion of tithes into a rent charge upon the first estate of inheritance, giving to the landowners an abatement of twenty-seven and a half per cent. No sooner, however, had the party flag been lowered, than an attempt was made to seize and bear it off in triumph. On the 14th May Sir Thomas Acland moved a declaratory resolution negativing in terms the right of Parliament to alienate to secular purposes any portion of church property. Lord John at once declared that this was a humiliation to which he would not as a minister submit. He had been duped by the professions of his antagonist, he said, into omitting the appropriation clause in the pending Bill. Ministers would not retract what they had done, but thenceforth he should doubt the sincerity of all professions of desire for peace, and "treat their declarations as stratagems intended to deceive:" and the motion was rejected. Melbourne did not disguise a like indignation at having been out-manœuvred; but he did not ascribe to the whole body of his adversaries an intention to mislead; and, while he sympathised in the feeling of his colleague, he knew that words of scorn were not likely to propitiate his antagonists in the Upper House, some of whom had in private, helped to lead him into the expectation that both the troublesome questions at issue might be brought to an amicable conclusion.

Lord Fitzgerald induced the Lords to adopt an amendment which, if it were sent down to the Commons, was certain to be rejected, as involving an infringement of the special functions of the Lower House. Both parties, though for opposite reasons, wished for an end of the controversy, and both consequently desired that the

measure should pass. Melbourne accordingly wrote confidentially:—

> I have had communication myself with the Speaker, and also with others, and I can assure you that if the Lords' amendment in the Tithe Bill is insisted upon, the bill will certainly be lost. The Speaker will do no more than state from the chair that the amendment is contrary to the privileges of the House, and inadmissible, and there will be at once a general acquiescence in the rejection of the measure, which is of itself no great favourite.*

This note was forthwith transmitted to the Duke of Wellington, without whose assent the amendment could not be withdrawn. Lyndhurst was consulted, and though the point of privilege was said to be debateable, all agreed that, under the circumstances, it would not be wise to raise it, and without the controverted alteration the Tithes Bill became law, and agitation on the subject was not renewed for thirty years. But Sir R. Peel thought he sufficiently met the implied claim for countervailing concession, by not repeating the proposal to abolish Corporations altogether; while he endeavoured to satisfy the sectarian views of his party, by various restrictions of municipal power, and by fixing the civic franchise at £10 rated value. The Lords, by Lyndhurst's advice, adopted these limitations; and the Commons thereupon threw out the Bill.

The first opportunity which had occurred since Melbourne became Premier of making O'Connell a suitable judicial offer, seemed to have arisen on the death of Chief Baron Joy. His appointment to the first seat in the Irish Court of Exchequer would hardly be agreeable in some respects to him; and it would inevitably give rise to a fresh storm of attack upon the Government, founded on the conspicuous part he had borne in contesting writs of rebellion, which were solely cognisable in that particular Court. By a different arrangement, however, a situation, equally honourable and lucrative

* Downing Street, August 8th, 1838.

might be placed at his option. Mulgrave, then in London, was consequently instructed to communicate confidentially with the Master of the Rolls, who, it was hoped, would not object to become Chief Baron, leaving thereby the Second Seat in Equity at the disposal of Government. Accordingly, the Lord Lieutenant wrote to Sir Michael O'Loghlen:—

MY DEAR SIR,

I am about to write to you in strict confidence, on a subject which I think was touched upon between us at the time I had the pleasure of conferring upon you the Rolls, namely, the possibility of its being the office of all others (should an opportunity occur) we should be most desirous of offering to O'Connell, and your own disposition to do all you can to facilitate the arrangement, by accepting some equivalent appointment. You will understand that there has as yet been no decision taken as to any offer to be made to him; but I myself feel all its advantages, whether it should be accepted or not. And you will perceive that there are many reasons why, from the present nature of business in the Court, it would be impossible to make him chief baron, whilst that post would offer a much larger field for distinction to a person of your energy and activity. I must, therefore, learn from you whether I am right in conjecturing from what passed previously between us, that I may tell Lord Melbourne that you would not be an obstacle to such an arrangement. I should be happy to recommend its being accompanied with a baronetcy, that the store we place upon your reputation and services might be more obvious.

Yours faithfully.

MULGRAVE.*

O'Loghlen replied, without hesitation or reserve, that his feelings in accepting his office had been correctly understood at the time, and that they were wholly unchanged. He had no desire for a seat in a Court of Common Law, but he

* From Eaton Place, June 11th, 1838.

was ready to resign the Rolls unconditionally, if there was any probability that O'Connell would take his place. He sought to make no terms of any sort; and, in point of fact, entertained the idea of returning to practice at the bar, as Sir E. Sugden was said to have intended doing, after his brief tenure of the Great Seal of Ireland, not long before. But of this he dropped no hint in his reply. Some days after its receipt Mulgrave wrote to him again:—

My dear Sir,

Nothing certainly could be more handsome, and at the same time fair and candid, than your answer to my confidential inquiry. I felt, in common with the Government, that it was of such importance that, upon this occasion, Mr. O'Connell should have an offer of some post in which we thought he might be beneficially placed, that, considering myself authorized by your letter, I sent for him and told him that whilst many reasons obviously prevented my proposing for his acceptance the actual vacancy in the Exchequer, I believed I could, for such an object, procure an exchange which would place at my disposal the Rolls. At the same time I thought it right to accompany this with the notification that, though you would kindly assent, I knew it would not be agreeable to you. He appeared very much pleased with the offer, but on other grounds gracefully declined it. I have no doubt that you have thus given us an opportunity of removing from his mind a disagreeable impression of exclusion, and I think the effect will be generally beneficial. I have now the pleasure of announcing to you that Lord Melbourne has cheerfully acceded to my recommendation of conferring on you the dignity of a baronet at the coming coronation, as a mark of the sense entertained of your public services during the period of my administration.—Believe, &c.*

O'Loghlen retained his office till his death, and Woulffe was made Chief Baron.

* From Eaton Place, June 18th, 1838.

Throughout a long official career, in which he had enjoyed for the most part the especial confidence of the Crown, Melbourne neither sought nor would accept any personal favour or distinction. Without a son to inherit his name, ill-nature said he had no motive for desiring advancement to a higher grade in the peerage; and would fain ascribe his refusal of decorations so much coveted, to the supreme vanity that sought its gratification in conferring honours upon men higher born than himself. His letters and familiar talk betrayed no such emotions. As a rule he generally would have dissuaded any one he really liked from seeking a step in the peerage. He loved to tell the story of a certain earl whom Lord Cornwallis laughed at for wishing a marquisate;—"I have no son and he has several, but if I had I should remember that after such a promotion, John and Tom could no longer afford to go to town on the top of the coach." Previous to the Coronation when many were asking favours, an old friend wrote to say that he would call on him to explain what he desired to have as a recognition of long fidelity. He happened to be the fourth who had come on similar business the same morning, and the minister's patience being rather exhausted, he said quickly, "Well, what can I do for you?" Fearing to let the opportunity slip, the anxious visitor muttered, "I don't very much care about it myself, but my lady wishes that I should be a marquis." Melbourne, who knew that he was not rich, opened his eyes and said, "Why, you are not such a fool as that, are you?" On another occasion, an importunate member of the party, whom he had once described as a fellow who was "asking for everything and fit for nothing," intimated that he had a new request to make, for reasons he wanted an interview to explain. The weary dispenser of patronage showed his note to Anson, saying, "What the devil would he have now! does he want a garter for the other leg?"

With respect to creating peerages he wrote:—I think it ab-

solutely necessary not to vacate counties or towns at the present moment. I would, therefore, boldly lay down as a rule founded upon the necessity of the circumstances, that we should make few members of the House of Commons. It follows from this that we must have a very limited creation, as it must be understood that the claims of those who are in Parliament will be considered hereafter. I propose, therefore, to make only eight; English—Hanbury Tracy, William Ponsonby, Sir John Wrottesley, Paul Methuen; Irish—Lismore, Rossmore, Carew; Scotch—Kintore. I think if we adhere strictly to this we can stand upon it and shall produce the least dissatisfaction, which is all that can be expected. The only promotions—Mulgrave to be a marquis, and Dundas to be an earl. I am very desirous that the whole should be limited, as these large creations at coronations are, I believe, quite unprecedented, and date no farther back than the coronation of George IV., who was overwhelmed with promises. If no members of Parliament are made, the whole may be discontented, but no particular person can be. I hope that you may think this the safest course that can be pursued in a difficult conjuncture. I send you John Russell's view of it, which is very much mine. All the Scotch agree that Kintore is the only Scotch peer we have who has fortune for it.*

I have this morning received Lord Queensberry's resignation of the Lieutenancy of the County of Dumfries upon the ground of Lord Kintore being made a peer whilst he is passed over.†

Leslie, in his recollections of the coronation, says, that, next to the Field-Marshal Duke, the most remarkable man in the scene was the First Lord of the Treasury.

I had seen him for the first time, years before, in Murray's drawing-room, at Albemarle Street. At a later

* To Lord Lansdowne, from South Street, June 4th, 1838.

† Idem, June 27th, 1838.

period I saw much of him at Holland House. His head was a truly noble one; I think, indeed, he was the finest specimen of manly beauty in the meridian of life I ever saw; not only were his features eminently handsome, but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual. His laugh was frequent, and the most joyous possible, and his voice so deep and musical, that to hear him say the most ordinary things was a pleasure; but his frankness, his freedom from affectation, and his peculiar humour, rendered almost everything he said, though it seemed perfectly natural, yet quite original.

Chantrey not long after executed for the Queen a bust in marble, which preserves his best expression in the noontide of his power. A replica at Panshanger is fitly placed in the gallery opposite that of his mother, instinct with loveliness, talent, and ambition.

Although free trade had made considerable way, protection to native corn was still an orthodox superstition which all incurred the social penalty of dislike or scorn who ventured to question openly. Mr. Villiers moved a resolution which condemned the sliding scale, and reckoned among his supporters a score of Whigs, and twice that number of Radicals. But even when the price of provisions had ominously risen, and distress, in town and country, among the labouring classes, was seriously increased, the more forethoughtful section of the Cabinet, headed by Lord J. Russell, did not contemplate more than the substitution of a fixed duty, while the more conservative section, headed by Melbourne, applauded his declaration in 1838, that "the minister who should try to carry the total abolition of the Corn Laws would be considered fit for a lunatic asylum." A great majority in both Houses of Parliament thought so too.

CHAPTER IX.

POWER AT LAST.

Macaulay's return from India -- Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan — Russia's designs on India — Durham in Canada — Military Patronage — Viscount Ebrington.

MACAULAY'S return from India was at hand; and Spring Rice, living as he did in the society of men of letters, more especially those connected with Cambridge, urged strongly the importance of losing no time in inviting him to join the Government. His colleagues listened and assented; but in their hearts few of them appreciated the great essayist at the value his friend put upon him. What was an essayist to them? A fountain of amusement ever fresh and vivifying for dull days in a country house; a lion to be asked to fill the fourteenth seat at a dinner-table; a candidate eligible for a Northern borough falling vacant during the recess, perhaps,—or perhaps not; desirable to secure, no doubt, if a secondary post could be found for him which nobody of monied or landed influence happened to want. Who is this Mr. Burke, about whom we are bothered: "has he any property?" And the objection was fatal to the great statesman's ever gaining admission to the Cabinet. The same superstition regarding the exclusive worth of acres and Consols prevailed half a century later among constitutional Whigs; and strange to say one of the fixed unbeliefs of the Radicals went forth to meet and to embrace it as against Macaulay. What did a sentence-maker

know about averages and the reflux of exchange or the rates of wages? What reliance could be placed upon a man who was too unenlightened to accept the dogmas of Bentham, and too sentimental to acknowledge Mill's Gospel of Utilitarianism? He had in his youth been tolerably sound in his democratic professions, and had made some showy speeches in Parliament for Reform; but he had never voted with Hume and Warburton; and Lord Durham had no opinion of him. What neither official whips or pragmatical propagandists understood was the great hold which a man of genius, whatever be his parentage or opinions, has upon the middle classes of the community, irrespective of sect or party, trade or calling. In 1838 Macauley's name was to multitudes a myth, with whom ten years later it had become a household word; but even then it was a power, silent but active, felt though unseen. Spring Rice understood this, and pressed the matter on the attention of the Lord President, who, better than most men of his class, was quick to comprehend the force of such an appeal:—

"I say nothing," he replied, "on the point you had adverted to as to Macaulay, as we shall so soon meet. It would be nothing to say that I have thought of it a good deal myself; but what is more material I know that Melbourne and J. Russell have, and although the question has its difficulties I should hope they were of a nature to be surmounted." *

Macaulay arrived in England early in June, too late, had his opinion been thought worth asking, regarding the affairs of Afghanistan. He talked to Lord Lansdowne and Spring Rice, to Lady Holland and Under-Secretary Stephen, about all manner of things oriental which had struck his imagination with wonder, or left their effigies sharp-cut and indelible in his remembrance. But few if any of his friends would have been swayed by his judgment at any time on a

* From Bowood, October 19th, 1838.

question of military administration or diplomatic policy. He had anecdotes and picturesque sketches enough about the Arabs of the Indus and the vales of Cashmere. But what our chances were of being able to hold the country by the puppet king we had set up, and whether it was wise to attempt so difficult and costly an acquisition, the sparkling reviewer was not the man to explain. His reputation indeed as a declaimer rather than as a debater was still fresh in the minds of his party; and even Sheil, who had no reason for loving or trusting him, desired that an auxiliary so notable and useful should without delay be brought into Parliament. His professions of preference for literary to political occupation only made his "friends think him out of his wits, or coquetting to raise his price."*

A tranquil autumn afforded the First Minister perhaps the sunniest if not the serenest period of enjoyment he had ever known. After three anxious years fortune seemed to have filled his cup to the brim. The country on the whole was prosperous. Ireland was comparatively tranquil, and Canada, though smarting still from recent wounds, seemed ready to adopt submissively the new institutions about to be given her. Letters from the South of Ireland noted many symptoms of social and industrial improvement, the spirit of agitation slept, and there was a general disposition among all parties to believe in the advent of better times under a new reign. the Home Secretary suggested indeed that Parliament should meet before Christmas to complete the legislative measures contemplated for the re-establishment of representative rule in Canada. The Premier by letter consulted several of his colleagues, stating frankly his own opinions and desiring to have theirs.

In view of the events impending in the East and the possibility that a movement on Herat might provoke a rupture with the Czar, ministers deemed it necessary to take precautions against any sudden attack by sea. For twenty years after Waterloo the vulnerability of the realm had rarely

* Letter to Macvey Napier, June 14th, 1838.

if ever occurred to the minds of men in power. But during that interval great changes had been made in the means of naval warfare and in the facilities for the rapid transport of troops and stores. If the number of men borne on the estimates had been reduced for the sake of economy, unabated confidence was still reposed in their valour and discipline; and although impressment had been abolished by statute few doubted that upon a pinch extra bounties would give back to the service as many blue-jackets as it required. But steam had deprived us of two advantages that in the great days of our maritime renown had stood us in good stead—the superiority of our seamanship, and the favour of the fickle winds. Having allowed the army, navy, and ordnance to be cut down to a point unprecedently low, the Victor of Waterloo gradually changed his mind, and began to grow uneasy at the defenceless condition of our coasts and dock-yards. Ruminating the whole bearings of the question in his solitary rides at Strathfieldsaye he resolved to communicate his anxieties to the Government, and on the 4th of October he confidentially addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury certain practical suggestions for consideration in framing the next budget. A minute was in consequence adopted by the Lords of the Treasury, not long afterwards, tending in the direction he desired; but the commercial panic of the following year, and the depression of trade in consequence, caused any increase of estimates to be deferred to a more convenient season; and not much was consequently done. Palmerston now suggested writing to "the Duke" unofficially asking his advice with a view to guard against any emergency that might arise, and the response was, as usual, outspoken but considerate, and patriotic without any tinge of personal or party prejudice, which were never suffered by him to mingle in the discussion of questions of the kind. Meanwhile Mr. F. Baring had furnished the First Lord with the papers on the subject at the Treasury; and it must have been with some feeling of chagrin that he felt himself obliged to admit his not having known of their existence before:—

My dear Duke,

I have this morning received your letter here, and am much obliged to you for it. When I wrote mine I was not aware of your Grace's of the 4th of October 1835, addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, nor of the Treasury Minute of the 23rd of December in the same year founded upon it. These documents have since been sent to me. It must be obvious to the most ignorant in these matters, that the question of the defence of the coast under the new circumstances which have been produced by new inventions, must be considered generally and not with reference only to particular points; and I am very happy to learn that it is your Grace's intention to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon the subject.*

On the accession of Queen Victoria, the German possessions of her house, which by inheritance went in the male line only, devolved upon her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who thenceforth took up his residence in Hanover. A large quantity of the royal plate, and a portion of the crown jewels belonged to King Ernest as heir-looms of his inheritance or as bequests under the will of his mother. Ministers had no desire or motive to dispute the claim, but they could not, as a matter of public duty, assent to the partition of so much valuable property of the royal house without direct evidence that would satisfy a court of law. Lord Cottenham undertook to investigate the title, and report for the information of the Cabinet; and in furtherance of his inquiries, Melbourne addressed the following private letter to the Duke of Wellington:—

My dear Duke,

You are probably aware that the King of Hanover is urging a claim to those of the crown jewels which were by the will of Queen Charlotte bequeathed to the Crown of

* From Windsor Castle, September 25th, 1838

Hanover. The Lord Chancellor, in order to form his opinion upon the liability of the claim, thinks it necessary that he should be acquainted with the provisions of the will of King George IV., which may materially affect the question, and as your Grace is one of the executors of that will, I have undertaken to learn from you whether you would object to putting the Chancellor in possession of that instrument.—Yours faithfully &c.*

By return of post he received the subjoined reply :—

My dear Lord,

I have not by me the late King George IV.'s will, and I don't think anybody could find it for me. If the Lord Chancellor should require it immediately I will go to town purposely to get it; if not I will send it to his Lordship on the first occasion on which I shall go to London. The Duke of Cambridge gave me some time ago some questions which he had received from Hanover, on the subject of the claim of the Crown of Hanover to certain of the crown jewels. I declined to give any answer, and I recommended the Duke of Cambridge to take the same course. My reason was that it appeared to me that any questions from the King of Hanover ought to be sent to one of her Majesty's subjects by the Queen's servants. I don't know what the Duke of Cambridge did."†

On this his correspondent wrote :—

My dear Duke,

I sent your note to the Chancellor, and I now send you his answer, by which you will perceive that it will serve every purpose if you can let him have the will the first time you come to London.‡

* From Windsor Castle, September 25th, 1838.
† From Walmer Castle, September 26th, 1838.
‡ From Windsor Castle, September 29th, 1838.

Lord Cottenham's note ran thus:—

There certainly can be no such hurry as to justify asking the Duke of Wellington to go to London on purpose. I am anxious that we should come to some conclusion before a suit is actually instituted, which in form will probably be a bill against the late King's executors, but that step will certainly not be taken without further communication. Therefore if the Duke will recollect it next time he goes to London, it will no doubt be in very good time.*

To his oldest and closest fellow-thinker in all that related to the conduct of the Government, he wrote at the beginning of October:—

I received your letters of the 28th ult. here yesterday morning. You do not say where you are going, but I presume home, and therefore I direct this letter to Bowood. We must have a Council soon for the further prorogation of Parliament, and I shall propose Saturday the 6th here. If you could come on that day and stay until Tuesday or Wednesday, and meet John Russell and Palmerston, we might have some conversation upon the Eastern affairs, which will be desirable. If it is inconvenient to you, do not do it; but if it suits, you may consider this as an expression of her Majesty's wish. The Queen would be very glad to see Lady Lansdowne at the same time, but would not wish her to undertake the journey if she is unwell, or unless it is perfectly agreeable.

Lord Durham's mission to Canada, from which much good had been expected, was brought to an abrupt termination by a decision of the House of Lords, which condemned and compelled ministers to reverse one of his most important executive acts. In the belief that the plenary powers of Government with which he had been clothed, warranted not

* Wimbledon, September 28th, 1838.

only his respiting political offenders, but substituting banishment for incarceration during a specific period, he had, with the advice of his council, exiled to Bermuda certain captive chiefs of the recent insurrection. No such punishment, it was argued by Brougham, was known to English law. The case was one without precedent, and after much discussion it was deemed inexpedient to allow a colonial governor to interpolate by his mere will a new form of penalty in the criminal jurisprudence of the empire. Lord Durham could not bear rebuke or question from the Home Government, and forthwith announced his resignation. A few days later, when talked over by Charles Buller, he repented, and wrote privately as if he might yet be coaxed, for the sake of the public service, to remain. Melbourne, who understood him well, and, as he said, thought he was better in Canada than England, laughed at his impulsiveness, but was for letting him have his way. Lansdowne thought so likewise:—

> It seemed to him almost impossible that after what he had done he should withdraw his resignation; still, what wounded vanity had done gratified vanity might undo, and he should not consider it as quite off the cards that the address of the inhabitants, if generally signed and urgently pressed, might induce him so far to reconsider his determination as to delay at all events his departure till he heard from England. No step should be taken till they heard from him again.*

This was the spirit of discernment, and temper sagacious and circumspect, in which Lansdowne habitually weighed every public question, and which rendered him under all circumstances one of the safest and best of counsellors. Melbourne's confidence in his judgment was unbounded, although by nature no two minds could be more differently constituted.

* From Bowood, October 19th, 1838.

The impression created upon Durham's friends in Government at home on learning his decision may best be given in their own words. The Colonial Secretary remained in town, where he was joined on the 17th by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, writing on the next day, says :—

> The despatches from Canada are gone to Melbourne at Windsor. Durham, on receiving Glenelg's letters of the 18th of August, resolved to resign. The letter was written three days after the proceedings in Parliament had been made known to him. His despatch is clever but most abundantly bitter, and is strong in its reproaches of the silence as well as the speeches of the Government. He impugns the attack on his Ordinance on the ground of its illegality. He says that the Bermuda section was all but surplusage, and that it might have been followed up by an act of the Bermuda legislature. This is evidently an afterthought, and was never previously suggested by himself. I remember asking the question in Cabinet and being told by Howick that the Bermudians were so jealous on the point of convicts and penal colonists, that there was no probability that such a step would be taken by them. Poor Glenelg, who is at this moment oppressed by the death of his brother Robert, is out of town. He seems to think that Durham might be induced to remain. But I think that impossible, and apprehend that he will be on his way before any letter can reach him. Besides, his reply to the British deputies announces his intention; it seems to be a burning of his boats. He speaks of justifying his proceedings in his place in Parliament, and expresses great bitterness and disappointment. He reverts to the case of Turton, whose appointment he says was suggested to him by a member of the Government. In this he alludes to Hobhouse, as I am informed. The contingency is a difficult one. Colborne luckily consents to remain in command of the troops. Whether he could exercise Durham's powers, or whether those powers should be

confided to him is another and a very different one. Robert Grant's death is a most unfortunate event coming at a most unfortunate moment. I think it probable that Melbourne will call us all together.*

The following was addressed from Windsor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

I have this morning received yours from Manchester. I wrote you the note which has been forwarded to you, because Anson assured me that you were expected in London, and I feared lest you should arrive and find us, at least as many of us as were within reach, assembled at Windsor. I wanted to consider these Indian and Persian affairs, which look very awkward, but which, I trust, will not have the serious consequences which they appear to menace. The recent expedition appears to me to have been a mistake. How to get out of it with credit, or rather with the least discredit, is now the question. We desire to instruct Auckland not to send the additional force demanded by McNeil to the Persian Gulf, and still more not to attempt the forward move into Persia, also recommended by McNeil. If the additional force has been already sent, and if the move into Persia has been undertaken and commenced (the latter I trust will not have been the case), there is no help for it. They must then act according to circumstances, in ignorance of which we could not take upon ourselves to send instructions. I am in hopes, however, that the matter will somehow or other blow over, and that Russia is not prepared to push at present to the extremity of hostilities. Upon consultation with John Russell and Lansdowne, we have fixed upon Monday the 19th of next month for our assembling in London, and I have written to everybody requesting attendance upon that day. You have omitted to put into your letter the Duke of Wellington's note to which you

* To Lord Lansdowne, October 11th, 1838, from Downing Street.

refer. When Lord Carrington died, I sent to the Duke the report of the Ordnance upon Deal Castle, and in his reply he told me that he was about to write to you upon the defence of the coast in the new circumstances of maritime war. I have seen some letters from Nichol, which appear to me very rational, and the whole affair of the Poor Law Act appears to me, to say the least, to bear a more favourable aspect than could have been expected from the temper which was supposed to prevail. You should write and impress upon Nichol any circumstances which appear to you to be of importance. It is, as you say most desirable to obtain Macaulay; any means of doing so I should be willing to adopt. If any should offer themselves, you may depend upon my availing myself of them, but it is not so easy to create them. Have you any notion as to how he stands inclined?*

After settling his quarrel with Mr. Wallis, whose criticism upon Mackintosh he had attacked in terms unwarrantably severe, Macaulay went abroad, where he remained during the autumn. In October the First Minister wrote to him, offering him the position of Judge Advocate in terms of more than usual compliment. The letter reached him at Florence, with one from the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging his acceptance, not only for the sake of the party but for his own: and reminding him that the duties were not onerous, the salary £2,500 a year, and the rank that of Privy Councillor. But his recent vows of devotion to the cause of party did not oblige him he thought to accept any subordinate post that it might be convenient to offer him; and having already profited more than most men of his standing and services by public employment, he felt all the more free to decline political livery and pay, without political power. He notes in his diary how little he felt complimented by the proposal. It did not strike him as even tempting. Money he did not want. He had little, but he had enough. Right Honourable

* From Windsor Castle, October 12th, 1838.

before one's name was a bauble which would be far, very far indeed, beneath him to care about.

Melbourne wished that the Cabinet should meet earlier than usual:—

I have waited all the morning before I wrote to you, in expectation of seeing John Russell, who informed me that he would come up to day. He is not yet arrived, at half-past five, and I therefore fear that he may have been detained by Lady John's not being so well. I should have written before in answer to yours, recommending an earlier meeting of the Cabinet, but you will perceive by the letters which I enclose that it has been, and still is a question whether it must not assemble immediately, and with as little delay as possible. If John Russell perseveres in the opinions which he gives in these letters, we must of course meet directly and discuss the question; I myself differ from him. I cannot see any reason, or any necessity for an early meeting of Parliament. It appears to me that there is no danger in leaving Canada in Sir John Colborne's hands for the present, and that his powers are amply sufficient for all emergencies that may arise. No event has happened of which we were not put in possession or might not have anticipated when we suffered Parliament to separate, and if there is no necessity for its meeting, I am sure there will be great advantage to the country in the delay of the discussion. I have consulted Rice, Glenelg, Palmerston, Duncannon, and they are all of the same opinion. I should wish to learn yours.*

Persia's designs on Herat had for some time occupied the attention of the Home and Indian Governments, and by degrees projects were matured that led to the memorable, and, as it proved unfortunate, policy of interference with the domestic affairs of Afghanistan:—

I received yesterday from Hobhouse Auckland's letters, and

* To Lord Lansdowne, October 25th, 1838, from Downing Street.

I send them up to-day to Palmerston. Hobhouse writes to have them back again as soon as possible. They should be sent round without delay. Auckland has adopted the course which, in the meeting we had at Windsor, where there were seven of us, we agreed to recommend to him, viz., not to follow McNeil's suggestion of moving into Persia from Bushire, but to take decisive measures in Afghanistan. It is a decisive move, and may bring on great events, but I believe necessary. This is no less than the question—Who is to be master of Central Asia? I thought the appointment respecting the foreign claims had been settled. You had better have it made directly. Newport must wait a little while before he gets his remittances. I do not remember that anything was said about the amount of his retiring pension. I am glad Stephenson holds the language he does to you, but he is very much dissatisfied with his position, and very anxious for a move. I do not like the suggestion about Ireland. Only think of the importance of that part of the empire, and the thorough wrongheadedness of the person proposed, and the importance which, after all, his connection would give to an indiscretion on his part. Lord Grey in or out, successful or unsuccessful, was never satisfied with anything, nor with himself, and therefore it is unreasonable to expect that he should hold with others.*

The Lord President was against an early meeting, but wished advantage to be taken of the comparative subsidence of party feeling to promote a comprehensive settlement of the Poor Law and Corporation Questions in Ireland. About the latter there was no difference of opinion in the Cabinet: about the former there was much. Some were for applying absolutely the principle of the workhouse test in the English Act of 1834, while others thought it inadequate and unsuitable. More critical and urgent topics, however, were about to absorb their immediate attention. In their

* Letter to T. S. Rice, October 29th, 1838.

recent correspondence, little allusion was made to Eastern affairs. Palmerston and Hobhouse had sent their last word to the Governor-General, and could only wait for his reply. At length it came, and brought the tidings that he had resolved to plunge into the unfathomed difficulties and dangers of an Afghan war. Palmerston lost no time in forwarding the official communications to the Treasury, accompanying them with a brief comment:—

> Here are the Indian despatches. Auckland seems to have taken a just view of the importance of making Afghanistan a British and not a Russian dependency, since the autocrat has determined that it shall not be left to itself. If we succeed in taking the Afghans under our protection and in garrisoning (if necessary) Herat, we shall regain our ascendency in Persia, and get our commercial treaty with that power. But British ascendency in Persia gives security on the eastward to Turkey, and tends to make the Sultan more independent, and to place the Dardanelles more securely out of the grasp of Nicholas. Again our baffling on so great a scale the intrigues and attempts of Russia cannot fail to add greatly to the moral weight and political influence of England, and to help us in many other European questions; while it must also tend to give us strength and authority at home. I fear, however, that it may be necessary for us, in order to maintain the attitude which we have been compelled to take, to increase somewhat in the spring our naval means of home defence. Can you dine with me on Saturday next to meet the Duke of Lucca; pray do if you can.*

The easy triumph of the expedition which replaced the exiled Shah Sooja in the palace of Cabul, with British troops cantoned around it to guarantee his safety, was chanted in many an editorial hymn of praise; and it was not Melbourne's way to grudge the gladness of his friends in their

* From Stanhope Street, October 31st, 1838.

success because he doubted inwardly its durability. Nor, when reverses came, and the crazy fabric of Afghan annexation suddenly crumbled down, did he think of casting off his full share of accountability. He had assented to a venture, which turned out disastrously, and there were those who scrupled not to hint that, in doing so, he had suffered his own judgment to be overborne by arguments that did not convince. On the other hand it is but fair to bear in mind the declaration of the Duke, recording his unqualified approval of the preparations made for the Afghan campaign, and the manner in which it had been conducted:—

> Having been, for a great part of my life, selected to carry into execution, under superior authority, measures of this description, no man can be more capable of judging, from experience, of the merits of Government in planning and carrying into operation such measures; and I should be the last man to doubt, at any time the expediency of this or the other House expressing its approbation of the conduct of the political servants of the Crown, in planning and working out all arrangements, preparatory to carrying into execution, great military operations. It happened to me, by accident, that I had some knowledge of the arrangements made for the execution of this great military enterprise; and I must say that I have never known an occasion on which the duty of a Government was performed on a large scale—on which a more adequate provision was made for all contingencies that could occur, and for all the various events which could, and which did, in fact, occur during the campaign. It would indeed be presumptuous in me to say more on this subject, having, I repeat, been made acquainted only by accident with the arrangements made preparatory to the campaign now brought under public consideration. With respect to the military services performed, I can say nothing beyond, or more deserving the officers and troops, than what has been stated by the Governor-General in his

despatch. I am well acquainted with the officers who have directed and performed these services; and I must say that there are no men in the service who deserve a higher degree of approbation for the manner in which, on all occasions, they have discharged their duty; and that, in no instance that I have ever heard of, have such services been performed in a manner better calculated to deserve and receive the approbation of Parliament and of the country.

Before a day was fixed for the meeting of the Cabinet, the unexpected death of Lady J. Russell deprived his colleagues of the presence and counsel of the Home Secretary:—

This is indeed a heavy blow for poor John Russell. I have heard from him, and I have seen letters from him to Fox Maule and Gore. He is evidently most deeply afflicted, but bears up manfully. He says he can himself attend to no business at present, but has given such directions as were obvious, for the transaction of that of the office. This amongst us may be very easily managed. I expect that after a short time I shall hear more of him with respect to his future intentions, and the period at which he may be able to attend to public affairs. It seems to me that it will not be expedient to meet for serious business without him, and that in case he cannot come so soon as the 19th, it will be better to delay our assembling. I mean to be up on the 9th, to the dinner at Guildhall, but shall have to return here.*

I have this morning received a letter from Tavistock, expressing John Russell's wish to be relieved from attending any Cabinets at present, and not stating any period at which he would be able to do so. So that, considering the important questions that are pending, it appears that it would be unwise to delay our meeting beyond the time already fixed, viz., the 19th inst. John Russell is prepared to retain his office, but would wish not to con-

* To Lord Lansdowne, November 5th, 1838, from Windsor Castle.

tinue leader of the House of Commons, to the labour of which duty he says he feels certain that he should find himself unequal. He has not determined on the step of resigning it, and, if time is given, he may be induced to change his views; but this is his present feeling. Give me a line to say how long you shall remain in London. I should wish to talk to you upon the present conjuncture. When events are evidently coming on which require the utmost energy, it is both mortifying and alarming to be so harassed by misfortune and calamity. Pozzo has received this morning a despatch from the Emperor, desiring him to remain here at present, and of a pacific character; proposing that the Shah of Persia should give up all further attempts upon Afghanistan, that we should retire from Herat and that the two missions, Russian and British, should be established upon their ancient footing of intercourse and co-operation at Teheran.*

I return you the Speaker's letter, with many thanks. I agree with it, and disagree with it, just as you do. His view of Durham's intention and conduct is very correct, but the proclamation is the really strong point against him. His coming away is subject to the remarks made by the Speaker, technically and theoretically, but practically it relieves us from embarrassment and danger. He had conducted, and was conducting himself in such a manner that his stay would have been perilous. What he did was often right, but always so done as to be totally indefensible. With respect to statements, &c., whenever my opinion has been asked, I have rather discouraged any such idea, and have particularly advised that no attack at all should be made upon him, and no more defence of us than is absolutely necessary. This I have done, because, in the first place, the difficulty which he had created did not appear to me to be very great, the greater part of the community not being very noisy upon this subject, and the addresses which have been presented to him being very moderate and not pronoun-

* To Lord Lansdowne, November 11th, 1838, from South Street.

cing any very decided opinion upon the points which we conceive to be at issue, but principally because as yet he has made no attack, and considers himself as having made no attack; and you know not how soon, or in what manner to defend yourself, until you know where the assault will be.*

What a very characteristic course it has been in Durham after coming home with his budget of disclosures, to have held no communication with any member of the Government.†

John Russell writes that the Cabinets should begin on the 10th of January, and he will be prepared himself to attend upon that day. I shall go down to Brighton either the 24th or the 26th, and return to London on the 3rd or 4th of January. Think about Canada, everybody, in and out, says that we must be prepared with some decided proposition at the opening of the Session.‡

Since I have been here I have had an opportunity of trying what you suggested respecting Lord Chichester, and I find that there is every reason to think that he would not be willing to engage in the matter. I have seen the Duke of Richmond, and talked to him pretty fully. He is very friendly, but would not be willing to unite himself more closely. He is very eager about the navy, upon which he says there is a strong feeling. If we were even to take the resolution of changing the Government of Ireland, which I cannot help thinking would be considered perilous, how are we to find room for Normanby? I have a great objection to changes in the departments which are made the objects of attack. It is like suffering judgment by default, and the parties run at are, of course, most unwilling to accede to arrangements which are, in fact, a surrender of their own reputations. John Russell will be in town on the 10th, and I suppose you will come at the same time.§

* December 14th, 1838.

† To Lord Lansdowne from T. S. Rice, December 15th, 1813.

‡ To T. S. Rice, December 22nd, 1838.

§ To Lord Lansdowne, from Brighton, January 2nd, 1839.

Like every one of discernment and reflection, given to the study of national history, he read with avidity the despatches of the Duke of Wellington, then recently published, and spoke in laudatory terms of the manner in which they had been edited. Colonel Gurwood asked the Duke whether he might not hope for promotion, or some other reward for his services, but was rather dissuaded from seeking for the former, on literary grounds, and advised to prefer pecuniary advantage, if he could obtain it from Government. His Grace put on paper the grounds on which he thought such a claim might be advanced, and permitted the statement to be referred to, as being from his pen. Other friends advised Colonel Gurwood to address the First Lord of the Treasury, assuming that he had expressed a disposition to further his views. This Melbourne explained to him was a mistake, as he had never considered whether his work would bring the author within the sphere of literary pensions; he could not interfere with the patronage of Lord Hill; and her Majesty having already twenty military and naval aides-de-camp, he could not recommend an addition to that number. But, in a few weeks he communicated to him his intention of recommending him for a pension of £200 a year.* The Duke in the meantime wrote "to assure his lordship that he had no intention of intruding himself into the affair, or of making any communication to him upon it, much less an application. He had no right to interfere in the exercise of the powers intrusted to the Minister, much less to solicit any favour for any gentleman;" but he thought the work in question deserving of reward, and if "there was a disposition to confer a pension it would be applauded by him."†

Two days after the Duke committed to paper, at some length, his views of the line of demarcation that ought to be observed between political influence and military patronage. Convinced when he became Premier in 1828 that the administration of the Horse Guards ought, for the sake of

* Colonel Gurwood to the Duke, March 11th, 1839.

† From Apsley House, February 9th, 1839.

the army and of the nation, to be kept as free as possible from political or party views, he laid down for himself the rule of refusing to exercise personal influence in favour even of private friends. Part of this curious document has been already quoted; the remainder may be most fitly given in connection with the incident out of which it arose:—

Lord Hill and I were connected in his Majesty's service for the first time thirty-four years ago. He was afterwards under my command; but whether under my command, or otherwise, there has not been an occasion in that lengthened period in which I have not been ready to give him every assistance in my power to enable him to execute any purpose which he might have in view for the public service. From the moment at which I resigned the command of the army in 1828, by desire of my colleagues, I considered it my duty to avoid to interfere, most particularly in matters of patronage. First, this course was in conformity with the principle on which my resignation was required. Secondly: interference on my part in one case of claim supposed to be founded on services, must have been followed by interference in hundreds of others, to the great injury of the service, and the diminution of respect for the independent character of Lord Hill, entrusted by the King as the General Commanding the Army in Chief. I have therefore *never interfered* in such cases, excepting when my advice has been required by Lord Hill, the Sovereign, or the Minister. In one or two instances, officers have memorialised me to pray that I would recommend their cases to Lord Hill. The utmost that I have ever done with such memorials has been to inclose each in a blank cover, directed to Lord Hill. But I have not interfered in general military affairs more than in personal matters and the distribution of patronage, excepting when my advice and opinion has been called for. I have stated that Lord Hill and

I have been long connected in the service, and in the habits of intimate and confidential intercourse. When his Lordship is in a difficulty, he knows that he can rely upon me to assist him by every means in my power to get the better of it, and he comes to me accordingly. I foresee these difficulties, and I may have gone before his desire to be assisted, and have given him my advice before it was asked, particularly in one or two instances latterly. I think that when the accounts arrived of the Canadian rebellion in 1837, and 1838, Lord Hill was actually coming into my room to ask for my opinion, when I gave him the paper just drawn which contained it. I mention these circumstances as showing clearly the nature of the intercourse between the General Commanding-in-Chief and me, and proving that the sole object in view of both, is to promote the prosperity of her Majesty's service, and by no means a desire on my part to interfere in anything, least of all in the patronage of the army, or what may be called personal matters. Colonel Gurwood is in the habit of seeing my letters; my secretary could show him copies of hundreds of answers to applications that I should interfere to obtain promotions, all written upon the principle of non-interference stated in this memorandum.*

A more remarkable communication was made on the second of March from the Duke of Wellington:—

(Private and confidential.) I have been so much in the habit of assisting the Queen's Government whenever I can, and of communicating with yourself when I see Indian affairs to require it, that I do not apologise for sending you the enclosed paper. You will be anxious to know how the information came to me. I know all sorts of persons;

* MS. memorandum on military patronage at Apsley House, March 13th, 1839. When in 1847 the Duke retained the command of the army, he withdrew from active participation in party warfare, and took his seat on the cross benches in the House of Lords.

they talk and write to me confidentially, and I frequently hear matters that are important. This information was communicated to me by an English gentleman who sent over this intelligence by his brother. He saw the paper containing the proposition, approved by the Emperor's signature. It had been referred to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, marine and war, and was referred back to the Emperor for final orders. We must not despise this mode of acquiring information; I could tell you some curious anecdotes to illustrate this part of the subject. I think it very doubtful that the Russians will venture upon the execution of such a plan. If they did, they would first seize the Cape. I don't doubt that the proposition has been made. That which is more probable is that they would send their Baltic fleet into the Mediterranean. With this aid they might practically carry into execution the separate article of their defensive treaty with the Turks. But I should not act fairly or half perform the duty I have undertaken, if I did not warn you of the danger of allowing this fleet to go down Channel at all; possibly diplomatic interference, at all events, a demonstration of the assembling of a sufficient force in the ports of this country would prevent the attempt. Your Lordship's most faithful servant, &c.

Memorandum enclosed—

A proposal has been made to the Emperor of Russia to send his fleet now in the Baltic twenty-seven sail of the line, with fifteen large frigates with 30,000 men on board the same, and transports to carry other troops to the East Indies, the object being to attack the three great settlements, Fort William, Fort St. George, and Bombay.

No time was lost in acknowledging the receipt of information so singular:—

"I am very much obliged to you," wrote the Premier from Downing Street, "for your letter, which I will have imme-

diately considered. I quite agree with you that the information ought not to be despised or neglected, and that this particular information comes from a source which gives it a claim to attention. But do you not think it improbable that the Emperor of Russia should seriously conceive the idea of an expedition of such magnitude with objects at such a distance? Buonaparte's going from the south of France to Egypt was nothing compared to it, though it was attempted in the face of the vast superiority of England, then in full preparation and activity.

Before he slept the Duke rejoined:—

I write a line in answer to your Lordship's note just received. I believe that the account given of the paper which I mentioned to you is substantially correct. I think that the execution of the Mediterranean plan is more probable than the larger one. But supposing that the policy of the two Governments, English and Russian, places them in a state of hostility towards each other, I do not think that the execution of the larger plan is, or would be deemed impracticable, with the knowledge that I have of the existing state of the means and resources of this kingdom for its defence and that of its extended Empire, and the constitutional difficulties, and the delay which must attend the measures to form and equip a force sufficient for its defence. Such a fleet as is described, so supplied with four months' provisions, could reach the Cape, which is, I believe, nearly defenceless, and with a diminished peace establishment of troops and no naval force. This colony would be seized, all descriptions of supplies and refreshment would here be received. Trincomalee, equally defenceless, without garrison, the troops in Ceylon having been again recently reduced in number, would fall. This is the only harbour in that part of the East. The rest of the plan is more difficult. But if the two Powers are really in a state of hostility, I don't know of any plan by which Russia could strike a blow

against this country, which would affect more real interests, all of which are more or less in relation with those parts of the world in which it is supposed that each of the Governments has objects which would bring the two into collision.*

It must be remembered that in the spring of 1839, a numerous detachment of the Indian Army was occupying Afghanistan, against the will and in defiance of the ill-suppressed resentment of the warlike race whose independence under guise of a protectorate we had assailed. In Egypt Mehemet Ali was steadily making preparation for the conquest of Syria, in which the following year he was nearly successful. It was no secret that his aggressive designs against the Porte were favoured by France, and consequently that we would be unable to reduce the strength of our squadron in the Mediterranean. The total number of men borne on the navy estimates for the year was but 33,665, including 2000 boys and 9000 marines; and the total number of ships of the line, and frigates actually in commission did not exceed thirty, though supplemented by numerous smaller vessels.

On the morning after the interchange of confidential notes above given, on the future and fate of empires, the Duke opened a private correspondence with his political opponent on a much happier theme.

My Lord,

My son, Lord Douro, has proposed to marry Lady Elizabeth Hay. You will probably be surprised that I should trouble you with this information, but you will recollect that you are the principal trustee of the grants to my family. The Acts which regulate these grants have enabled the Duke of Wellington to jointure a wife, but not his son, or the Duke to jointure his son's wife. It is desirable to bring in a Bill to amend the Acts upon this subject; and I venture to trouble your Lordship upon the

* All three letters bear date, March 2nd, 1839.

subject, in order to request you to fix a time with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at which you will receive my solicitor, Mr. Parkinson, that he may submit to you the Bill which it is proposed to introduce. That which I should propose is that the Duke of Wellington should have the power of contracting to jointure his son's wife to the same amount as the existing acts give him the power of contracting for a jointure for his own wife; that is, £2,500 a year. I have the honour, &c., &c.

With felicitations on the approaching event Melbourne replied that what was proposed to be done was strictly right and reasonable, and, speaking for himself only, and on first impression, he could not see any objection to be raised to the contemplated Bill. The sooner the matter was taken in hand the better, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and himself would be ready to receive Mr. Parkinson at half-past two o'clock next day.*

The lenient exercise of executive authority in Ireland by Lord Mulgrave had not extinguished agrarian crime, and when, in addition to other shocking outrages, the Earl of Norbury was, in open day, while walking with a relative, shot in his own demesne,† the outcry against the Government waxed loud and threatening. Sheil was sent for one day by the Premier, and asked his opinion as to what should be done:—

"Do you remember," he replied, "your question to me at Crampton's table twelve years ago, 'How is it they don't shoot one of the big 'uns?' You see they have come to that way of thinking at last."

Melbourne looked very grave, and said in a low voice:—

Yes, I remember; it is terrible; and no one can tell me what is to be done. As one of the severest judges said to

* From South Street, March 4th, 1839.

† January 1st, 1839.

me when in Ireland, if hanging would do, it ought to have been done long ago. I do not believe in exceptional measures; and yet, I suppose, Stanley and Peel will put us in a minority if we don't take them.

Sheil was at the best of times one of Job's comforters. He undervalued the potency of social grievances, and ascribed to political and religious causes all the discontent and insubordination that prevailed. Drummond was, on these points, a better and clearer guide. By long residence and open-hearted sympathy he had come to understand better than any Englishman of his day whence the waters of bitterness welled up in crime, and his four years' experience in the daily administration of the law in Ireland qualified him better than any other man to say what should and what should not be done. His influential counsel, given throughout that period, never vacillated, and while he lived the apothegm (claimed by Normanby and) embodied in his celebrated letter to the magistrates who called for a new Coercion Bill, was maintained undeviatingly: "it must be always remembered that property has its duties as well as its rights." The enunciation of this now admitted, but till then unheard of principle, stimulated many Opposition Peers to wrath. A select Committee was obtained by them early in the session to inquire into agrarian crime, and the methods which should be taken for its suppression. The inquiry from the first assumed the form and tone of an inquisition into the conduct of the Viceregal Government. The unwonted exercise of the power of reprieve had frequently been determined on without the recommendation of the convicting judge. The Committee, amongst other things, reported this to be a practice novel and reprehensible, and a resolution to that effect was moved by Brougham.* Ministers met the accusation of culpable leniency with a direct negative, and were beaten by a majority of five. The next day, Lord John, alluding to the vote of the Peers

* Hansard, March 5th, 1839.

declared, that as Home Secretary, he did not concur in the historic truth or the constitutional propriety of attempting thus to limit the merciful discretion of the Crown, and that until it should be so limited by Act of Parliament, he would not advise the Queen to observe it. Sir Robert Peel characteristically shrunk from any attempt to embody the doctrine of limited mercy in a legislative resolution; but endeavoured to dissuade the Commons from a counter resolution moved by Lord John on the 15th April, which was carried by a majority of twenty-two.

Normanby, tired of playing mock king upon provincial boards, was eager to assume the *rôle* for which he deemed himself eminently fitted, as a leading courtier and statesman; and the portfolio of Colonial Affairs (though not without misgiving) was transferred to him. Viscount Ebrington was deemed the person best qualified to succeed him as Governor of Ireland.* He had long enjoyed the private friendship and public confidence of all the influential members of the administration, and had more than once rendered them essential service. Hitherto he had filled no office, being content to let the more eager and ambitious divide amongst them the honours and advantages of power, while he was ever ready to head resistance to any attack which seemed to threaten the stability of his party. A commoner had not held the post of Viceroy since the days of Henry Cromwell; and on constitutional grounds it was considered right that, as the Chief Secretary was responsible in person to the Lower House for the acts of the Irish department, the Lord Lieutenant should be able to defend them as a member of the Upper House. It was therefore proposed that Lord Ebrington should be called up by writ in his father's lifetime, and should take his seat as a peer before assuming his new functions. The announcement of his nomination gave general satisfaction, and the necessary arrangements being completed, he left town to spend a few days with his relative Lord King at Ockham. While there a special

* His appointment bears date, April 3rd, 1839.

messenger brought him a communication marked private and immediate from Downing Street, desiring his presence without delay. A vote in Parliament had taken place which seemed of more threatening consequence than had been first apparent; and Melbourne was discomforted by the fear that he had unwittingly beguiled his friend into accepting a conspicuous and expensive post, only to incur the vexation and ridicule of being speedily obliged to relinquish it. He could not therefore rest until he had released Lord Ebrington from his engagement, and told him candidly why he did so. He was met, as he deserved, with unselfish frankness and good humour. Lord Ebrington said that "as he had never sought the office, and had undertaken it only to assist his friends in the conduct of the public service, he was ready to retain or to relinquish it as might seem most conducive to that object; and that if reasons into which he did not inquire rendered it preferable to confer the Viceroyalty on some one else, he did not wish that any consideration for his feelings should be allowed to stand in the way." Melbourne at once replied that he had no one else in view: on the contrary, he thought it would be very difficult under the circumstances to find a substitute in whom he could confide. But he knew by experience that an eldest son could not afford to incur for nothing the charge of a costly outfit: and to throw away a position of great weight in the Commons avowedly for the sake of an object that might not be securable, would justly cause vexation and regret to himself and all concerned. He repeated unreservedly the assurance that his only anxiety was that which he had already stated. Lord Ebrington thanked him warmly for the delicacy and generosity which had evidently prompted him on the occasion. His father had made matters easy for him as to expense; he did not regard the recent vote quite so gloomily as other people did; but whatever might betide he was ready to perform what he had undertaken, if it were thought desirable that he should do so. Looking back at the transaction after a lapse of years, he

always said that he valued infinitely more the friendship that offered to release him from his obligation, than the flattering terms in which he had been invited to take office; and that he hardly thought any other Minister in a like situation would have acted as Melbourne had done. His unselfishness where the interests of his party were concerned, was illustrated by his persistent refusal to appropriate to himself any portion of the favours or honours which, by his advice, the Crown could bestow. The Sovereign on one occasion pressed him to accept the blue ribband, as certain of his predecessors in the administrative primacy had done, assigning as a reason that this was almost the only way in which royalty could signify to the world the high appreciation felt of his faithful services. He thought perhaps that it might seem ungracious if he declined without giving a reason, and that a formal profession of indifference to a decoration coveted and manœuvred for sometimes by the best-born in the realm would expose him to the suspicion of overweening self-esteem. His wit came to the rescue, and prompted the suggestion that he was bound to husband resources of the kind for sustaining the influence of his Government, and not to waste them in the gratification of personal feeling.

A Garter may attach to us somebody of consequence whom nothing else will reach; but what would be the use of my taking it? I cannot bribe myself.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESTORED CABINET.

Formation of railways in Ireland—The Speakership — Resignation of Ministers — Ladies of the bedchamber — Ministers resume office—Postal reform.

THE session of 1839 witnessed the failure of another measure which many had looked forward to with sanguine expectations for the industrial improvement of Ireland; and the abandonment of which, not in consequence of any actual defeat, but in the more significant silence of despair, caused deep disheartenment among moderate men of all parties in that country. The darling scheme of Mr. Drummond for the social regeneration of his adopted country was the creation by Government aid of a complete system of railways. In 1835 joint-stock enterprise had laid hold of the chief lines of communication in England; and by prodigious outlay, to a great extent unremunerative, in litigation before committees and in buying off opposing proprietors at extravagant rates of compensation for land, had secured the profit and the patronage of huge monopolies. The scandalous incidents of the proceedings were notorious. But it was the heyday of a new species of speculation, which once entered on by the community at large, it seemed impossible to arrest halfway. In Ireland it was still open for consideration, whether upon national grounds, and for the general good, converging lines connecting each province with the capital, and having branches more or less numerous which would bring all the

secondary towns within a general system, might not be marked out by some impartial and competent authority; instead of leaving the most profitable portions to be seized on for private advantage while the poorer and remoter regions were left untapped in their helpless stagnation. When engaged in the Ordnance Survey, Drummond had studied with the perspicacity of a statesman the physical and moral condition of widely estranged districts; and he had come to the conviction that, having true regard to the peace and welfare of the empire, very different maxims ought to be followed in a country so full of the painful anomalies of misrule from those deemed adequate for the development of new modes of transit in peaceful and affluent Britain. *Laissez faire* in the supercession of great highways and their re-appropriation by private companies might one way or other be made to do on the eastern side of the Channel, where all investments were secure and capital was superabundant. But on the western side, where neither of these conditions existed, it seemed to him mere pharisaical prudery to insist upon adherence to a like rule. Through the wealthier counties, railways by dint of stock-jobbing and local bribery might gradually be made; but to leave the remaining two-thirds of the island to their own resources was plainly to doom them for generations to a new species of exclusion from common benefits, and to throw away an unprecedented opportunity for unifying and assimilating long-segregating and greatly differing communities. He believed, moreover, that were a general impulse promptly given by Government to industrial development simultaneously throughout the country, headway would be made in favour of order, and a great step would be taken towards encouraging the growth of the social element of all others the most needed; namely, an industrious middle class. Several continental states, warned by the spectacle of what was taking place in England, had begun to adopt the synthetic in preference to the experimental method; and the energetic Under-Secretary had so far succeeded in winning over the leading members of the

Cabinet to his views, that in 1836 an address to the Crown was carried by Lord Lansdowne to appoint a royal commission of inquiry into the best mode of forming railways in Ireland. Its members were, Colonel (afterwards F.M. Sir John) Burgoyne, Professor Barlow of Woolwich, Mr. Richard Griffith the well-known geologist, and Mr. Drummond. With the aid of the best men engaged in the Trigonometrical Survey, they succeeded in less than two years in producing an elaborate and exhaustive report upon the industrial wants and capabilities of the country, accompanied with alternative schemes for the simultaneous creation of iron roads in different directions on easy and economical terms; a common feature in the varied proposals being Government advances at 4 per cent., repayable out of earnings, and in default, by a local charge on the counties intersected, according to the degree of benefit derived respectively. Irishmen of all parties concurred in applauding the recommendations of the Report, and in petitioning Parliament to adopt them. But when Lord Morpeth moved in committee of the whole House for a loan of £2,500,000 to commence the operations in South Leinster and Munster, Sir Robert Peel denounced the project as unsound in principle, vicious in detail, and likely to prove perilous as an example. Wherever railways would pay, they were certain to be made; wherever they would not prove remunerative, they ought not to be constructed. Community in profit and loss was a philanthropic phantom; and making up for lost time in the life of a nation was a fantastic dream. Want of access to the great markets of the empire might be the cause of want of development in agriculture, mining, fisheries, and trade; and want of employment might be a main cause of insecurity and disaffection; but the credit of an opulent state ought not to be pledged to try bold experiments for the redemption of dangerous poverty: and all matters of this kind must be left to find their own level. The economists cheered Sir Robert's blighting anathema, which amounted in fact to the wisdom and justice of wishing strength to the strong, wealth

to those who were already well off, the prizes of fortune to such as could snatch them, and in the words of Carlyle, "devil take the hindmost!" Melbourne was no enthusiast —no sanguine believer in the art of precipitating popular regeneration; but he read with generous anger and scorn this mode of paltering with the long arrears due in account between the two countries; and he thought less than ever of his chief competitor for power, whom the nemesis of short-sighted parsimony overtook in due time.*

Early in the previous year Mr. Abercromby had intimated his intention of resigning the Speakership, feeling that he no longer possessed the degree of ministerial confidence which in his view was indispensable for the due conduct of public business and the maintenance of the authority of the chair. A correspondence ensued, in which Melbourne's part, as he himself described it, was "to soften him towards John Russell, and to induce him to forgive any irritating expressions which he (John) might have used in his correspondence. He wrote me a very kind letter, thanking me for the tone and temper of mine. I thought that this was an observation upon the different style of John Russell's letter, and all I said was that as to tone and temper, it was very easy for a person to be cool who had not been engaged in the disputes which occasioned a difference between them."† Although not wholly satisfied, the Speaker consented to retain his position during that and the following session, at the end of which he withdrew from a position he had never coveted, and in which he was never perhaps thoroughly at ease.

While the issue of the struggle on the Jamaica Bill was pending, a scene occurred in the House of great irregularity and disorder, which the Speaker was unable to control. His

* See the unavailing proposal of Sir Robert Peel in 1849, that Government should undertake the entire reconstruction of society and a new plantation of whole regions in Ireland, desolated by famine notwithstanding the unproductive expenditure of double the sum, which as a loan would have given Ireland betimes a cheap and comprehensive system of railways.

† From Windsor Castle, January 8th, 1838.

self-love refused to admit the failure to be owing to his own want of presidential weight with the refractory Assembly. He chose to lay the blame rather on the leader of the House and his friends in the Government, whom he reproached not for the first time of having neglected to sustain his authority in the chair; and on the 30th of April he acquainted Lord Russell of his fixed resolution to resign. Spring Rice believed that his favourite aim in political life was at length within his reach, and wrote to the head of the Government reminding him that:—

> On three former occasions, in deference to the wishes of others, and to what were considered the interests or the convenience of the party, he had abandoned his own views without objection or complaint; and that Lord Russell, in December 1837, had stated that he should consider himself bound to attend to his wishes, which he had so handsomely put aside on the last occasion. These circumstances were known at the time to the Cabinet; and he now claimed the fulfilment of what he deemed a binding pledge.

Melbourne *more suo* replied—

> The opinion is, that if you continue to wish it you shall be our candidate for the Chair.

Verbally and in writing many of the most influential members of the party intimated their readiness to secure his success. But he had contrived to alienate several leading Radicals, who were, moreover, at the time out of humour with the Government in its opposition to the Ballot and its hesitation to adopt the plan of penny postage: and the blame of the latter lay inevitably at the door of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Conservatives put forward Sir George Clark as a rival candidate, and more than one attached friend warned Rice how numerous the defaulters would be below the gangway on his side. Mr. Bannerman wrote that it was quite evident the object in view could not be accomplished, and that to attempt it would only give a triumph to

Opposition; when asked his opinion Mr. W. H. Ward declared that there were at least sixty who would not vote for him.*

When Abercromby consented to retain the position of Speaker at the beginning of 1838 at the urgent desire of the Premier, it was agreed that a select committee should be appointed to consider the whole question of procedure with reference to local and general legislation, and that his suggestions for its amendment should be fully submitted for consideration. Some of the most experienced and influential members on either side consented to serve upon it, and Mr. Charles Shaw Lefevre was chosen Chairman. In the main his views coincided with those of the Speaker; and owing in a great measure to the sedulous pains taken by him to make clear by anticipation what the working of the reformed system would be, and the exercise of his powers of individual suasion, he succeeded in carrying a report almost unanimously in the committee, and which embodied well-nigh all the recommendations of the Speaker.

These were great and substantial improvements, the benefit of which we feel at this day; and being adopted by the House, it might have been expected that the over-susceptibility of their author would have been soothed, and that he would have contentedly reposed in the satisfaction of having performed his duty. But an exacting disposition is as unhappy in stinted praise as in utter want of recognition. The new rules and orders passed as easily as if there could not have been two opinions on the subject. Abercromby felt jealous of what he termed the cold and matter-of-course tone in which the affair was concluded, and once more informed Lord John Russell that he was weary of a post in which he felt he was not appreciated: and that he was determined to retire.

I was brought (says one who knew him well, and cherished for him genuine regard) into frequent contact with the

* Letter from Rowland Alston, M.P. for Herts, May 9th, 1839.

Speaker, who was of that unhappy temperament that he was too apt to take a gloomy view of everything, and of a nature so sensitive that he frequently complained to me of the want of support which he received both from the Government and the House: a great deal of which was purely imaginary. I attributed this in some measure to the state of his health, which was not sufficiently good to enable him to bear the great fatigues of his office, especially at the age of sixty and upwards. But this infirmity, and his want of confidence in the support which the Government were disposed to afford him, led to his resignation. I never was more surprised in my life than when, standing behind the chair, I heard the announcement.

Of the Speaker's intention very few up to that moment were aware. Spontaneously many men of judgment and weight tendered their support to the member for Hampshire, if he would allow himself to be put in nomination as his successor. Ministers were pledged to Spring Rice, and naturally deprecated a division in the ranks of their party; but after some days it grew evident that a considerable section of the Radicals, led by Hume and O'Connell, would not support him, and he consequently relinquished, though not without regret, what had been so long the aim of his ambition. Meanwhile Lord Stanley wrote in reply to a letter asking his intentions:

I have this moment received your friendly communication of your views and intentions, and I hasten to reply to it before conferring on the subject with any one; at the same time you have relieved me from much embarrassment by requesting that your letter may be made known to Sir Robert Peel. I should not have felt myself at liberty to receive such a communication on a political subject without naming it to him, and yet I should have been unwilling to violate your confidence. But your course has set me free, and at the same time that I am enabled to place your letter in his hands, I reply to it at once, because I

have no right to compromise him in my answer even indirectly. I should, as you well know, have sincerely rejoiced had you been offered as a condidate for the Chair in 1835, because I should then have had no difficulty in at once gratifying my personal feelings and giving effect to my political opinions. At that time you and I had not widely diverged, nor indeed differed, except on one point when you had endeavoured to maintain a position nearer to mine than most of your supporters, but which I felt to be untenable. But on the same grounds I own I regret to hear that you are coming forward now. Fresh alliances have been formed by both of us, and as you candidly and kindly admit "new obligations and duties have been imposed on me." Entertaining still my old feelings of personal regard, I cannot but look on the election of a Speaker as a party question. It was studiously so made by your party, then in opposition, in 1835. On the strength of it Abercromby's successor is selected from the Cabinet by the administration; it becomes almost inevitably an expression of opinion, not on the merits of the individual, nor even his individual political views; but on the political system, as a whole, of the Cabinet of which he is a member. That system as pursued since 1835, I consider vicious in principle, and dangerous from the combination by which it is supported; and on a question thus raised, as I fear it must be, I can, politically speaking, take but one course, and that one at variance with my private feelings of regard for you. More I cannot say; there are, as you know, Cabinets out of office as well as in, and never is the member of either a perfectly unfettered agent (nor ought he to be): nor is too open a communication between those on opposite sides free from serious objections. My course, however, individually is in my judgment quite clear. In a trial of strength between opposing parties, I must give my vote against the representative of the Cabinet to which I am opposed. I am not insensible to the advantage, if possible, of a con-

currence of parties in the choice of a Speaker, for the purpose of giving greater weight to his authority in times when it is much required; but I must frankly say I do not think such a concurrence possible; and if there be a contest I must, though with reluctance, and that reluctance increased by the friendly tone of your letter, support the claims of a Conservative candidate. I am sure that you will understand and appreciate the grounds on which I form my decision, and will not the less believe me to be, with my sincere regard, &c.*

Finally Lord John, on the 8th of May, after a consultation with Melbourne, wrote saying:—

We are of opinion that your being proposed for the Chair would only lead to disappointment on your part, and cause embarrassment to the party. I say this with great regret, knowing how much your own wishes were directed to this object, and feeling that you are in every way qualified to preside over our debates. At the same time, I think it but natural that a Chancellor of the Exchequer should have made opponents (by pursuing the strict line of his duty), who would have felt no such objection to the individual had his own personal merits been alone in question. Yours very truly,

J. R.

It was resolved to nominate Mr. Lefevre instead; and then letters came from colleagues and others, as if in ignorance of the decision, offering support full of confidence and good-will. Here is a specimen written the day after, by one likely to have been thoroughly cognisant of all that was going on:—

The answer I four years ago found it necessary to send your note about the Speakership has always weighed on

* Lord Stanley to T. S. Rice, from St. James's Square, May 5th, 1839.

my conscience, though I think the decision was, upon the whole, the best which then could have been come to. It is saying nothing to say I shall vote for you, as you know the Government of course vote together, but I cannot resist telling you how sincerely glad I shall be if ever so (little) I can contribute to placing you where you wish to be, and where being placed I think you will very ably discharge the arduous duties of the situation.

Several influential Conservatives, learning how the case stood, evinced a willingness to accept Mr. Lefevre as an independent candidate; and thus it came to pass that without a competitor, and solely upon the ground of fitness and merit, the lot fell upon him. By this time, however, events had occurred in the absorbing interest of which the affair of the Speakership was for some time forgotten.

On the morning of Tuesday, the 7th of May, ministers found themselves in a majority of only five in a full House on the bill which proposed to suspend the Legislative Assembly of Jamaica, and at the Cabinet held in the afternoon they agreed unanimously that it was their duty to resign. No doubt had been expressed by the leaders of Opposition that a total change of the powers and forms of rule had been rendered necessary by the conduct of the Planter oligarchy in the island, who still retained exclusive privileges and franchises; and who hardly veiled their fatuous hope of being able, by dogged resistance to the will of Parliament, practically to defeat the policy of Negro Emancipation. In point of principle, as was subsequently proved, there was little difference between the two great parties in Parliament; but in the striving for ascendency the Jamaica question had become a portion of the battle-ground, like almost every other of importance. Mr. Labouchere's bill was severely criticised as needlessly raising constitutional doubts regarding the manner in which imperial control ought to be asserted over a contumacious dependency. Ministers had lost several seats since the general election of 1837; and

their weakness in division was the chief fault assigned in debate. So long as no grave measure of organic change was in dispute a nearly balanced condition of parties might continue; but on a measure for suspending the constitution in a great colony, and for temporarily administrating all the functions of Government by the direct authority of the Crown, it would have been unseemly to retain their places by a merely nominal majority in the House of Commons. The Premier therefore waited on the Queen, and unconditionally resigned, recommending her Majesty to send for the Duke of Wellington. With many expressions of regret at losing his services, the Sovereign prepared at once to act on his advice. The incidents that followed are well known. The Duke submitted his reasons for thinking that a Conservative Premier ought to be in the Lower House, and named Sir Robert Peel, who presented a list of persons qualified to undertake the duties of the various departments, to none of whom any exception was taken. But on his asking permission to submit the names of the ladies qualified to constitute the household, the youthful Queen naturally manifested surprise and concern at a proposal that seemed to deprive her suddenly of the friends of her youth by whom she had hitherto been surrounded. Sir Robert was disconcerted by the intimation which he took to imply unwillingness to remove any of the ladies of the bedchamber; and took counsel with the Duke of Wellington. Lord John meantime was sent for and requested to state whether the objection raised by the Sovereign was within her constitutional discretion. He replied in the affirmative; but thought that the Cabinet should be called upon to advise collectively upon the course to be taken. After full deliberation a minute was adopted to the following effect:—

The Queen having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir R. Peel, to remove the ladies of her bed-chamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she

conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings.

The old ministers thereby took upon them, as it was their duty to do, the full responsibility of the proceeding, and resolved to abide the judgment of Parliament.

The truth seems to be that on both sides there was a misunderstanding, due possibly to warmth of feeling. Her Majesty was strongly attached to the people about her, and imagined that the new Minister wanted to get rid of them all. He, on the other hand, did not wish that the wives and sisters of the out-going cabinet ministers should remain about her Majesty's person, and did not make it very clear to what extent he desired the changes to go. No adequate explanations took place. If they had, the difficulties might possibly have been removed. But her Majesty, under the impression that Peel wished to exclude from her daily presence the ladies whom hitherto she had best known, appealed to the fidelity of Melbourne and his colleagues to sustain her in the unprompted resolution she had expressed. Before a like exigency could recur care was taken to come to an understanding; and ever since, coincidence of political opinion has ceased to be considered essential in the selection of the ladies of the royal household, except regarding the Mistress of the Robes, who is always of the party in office. With the acquiescence of both Houses, the Whigs resumed office, which they retained for two years longer.

On the morning of the day fixed by Lord Brougham for taking into consideration the late ministerial crisis the Duke wrote to the Premier:—

I have seen your Lordship's note to Sir Robert Peel of yesterday. You are probably not aware that Lord Brougham had intended to bring under discussion on Friday the subject of the attempt to form an administration. I prevailed upon him in the House of Lords to forego this intention. But I think it probable; indeed he said he would bring the subject forward on this day. I feel no

desire to reveal, indeed I could not reveal, the conversation with which her Majesty honoured me. It did not relate to any details in respect to the formation of the Administration; but more to general principles. I do not therefore ask for permission to relate anything. But as the colleague of Sir Robert Peel, it may be necessary for me to state his case as it appears in the correspondence to which her Majesty has permitted him to refer; and I apprise your Lordship that this may be the case, in order that you may have with you copies of the papers, in case you should find it necessary to make any observations.*

The reply is dated the same day:—

I beg leave to acknowledge your Grace's letter of this morning. I had heard the circumstances which your Grace states respecting Lord Brougham's intentions on Friday last, but not from any certain authority. I beg to return your Grace my best thanks for your communication. The permission to state the case, and for that purpose to employ the correspondence, which I have been commanded by her Majesty to signify to Sir Robert Peel, is of course extended to your Grace.†

Melbourne narrated with precision, in the Lords, all that had occurred, and justified his conduct and the counsel he had given:—

Entirely agreeing with the opinion laid down by her Majesty that it is not expedient to apply the principle which Sir R. Peel would apply, and which there is no objection made to his applying, to other parts of the Household, I so completely concurred, for reasons into which I abstain from entering at present, with her Majesty, that it is inexpedient to apply that principle to the ladies of her Majesty's bed-chamber, and to remove

* From Apsley House, May 13th, 1839.

† From South Street, May 13th, 1839.

them, or any part of them, on every change of Administration, that we felt ourselves bound as men and as ministers to come to the determination to support and maintain the Sovereign on the present occasion. I know very well that on coming to this determination and conclusion, all my colleagues, and still more that I will be exposed to all kinds of insinuation and obloquy. I know that we expose ourselves to the charge of intrigue, to the charge of personal considerations, to the imputation of a preconcerted plan, to the insinuation of having beforehand settled this objection to render abortive any attempt to form another Administration. I know very well that there are situations in which a man must expose himself to those calumnies. I do not expect that they will be made against us here, as they do not appear to be made against us in the other House of Parliament; but they have been made against us in other quarters of considerable weight and influence, and therefore I cannot allow them to pass altogether unnoticed and uncontradicted. It is a bad thing to have nothing to oppose to charges and imputations of this kind, but one's own mere personal assertion. But when I parted with her Majesty on the morning of Wednesday last, I thought it my duty to tender such advice as I gave her with respect to the persons to whom she ought to apply, and to the course which it was incumbent on her to follow. I thought it, I say, my duty to tender such advice to her Majesty, considering the novelty and difficulty in which she was placed. But I most distinctly assure your Lordships, not using any asseverations or protestations; for mere asseverations and protestations might possibly produce on the minds of your Lordships the same effect which they would produce on mine, and might rather induce a doubt of the veracity of the party using them. But I most distinctly assure you, that as to the ladies of the household I gave her Majesty no advice whatever; for I fairly declare to you, my Lords, that I did not expect, that I

did not anticipate, I could not conceive that this proposition could be made. There are many reasons why this proposition should not be made to her Majesty. They are so obvious that I need not particularise them. I say nothing of the prudence, nothing of the policy, nothing of the expediency of such a proposal. It is not for me to instruct the noble Duke opposite, nor the right hon. Baronet who holds so distinguished a situation in the other House of Parliament, nor the noblemen and gentlemen usually acting with them, who have greater experience than I have in the practical conduct of affairs. I have had, however, some experience, too; and from the construction of the court of our late revered Sovereign, and from the relations which existed between him and his ministers, I have some experience to bring to bear on this matter; and I can assure your Lordships that those personal matters, those strokes of force, are never worth while. They give a tone and character at the commencement of a career which cannot be productive of good. They produce a feeling of irritation and alienation, which is ten times worse than the evil which they are intended to obviate. From some experience, I publish this as my opinion to the world. I know where the difficulty lies, I do not mean to deny that there might be some suspicion felt among the supporters of the noble Duke, as I know by experience was felt among my own. But the experience I have had leads me to the conclusion that those inconveniences, imaginary as they sometimes are, and exaggerated as they always are, are nothing as compared with the inconveniences generated by the sort of force adopted here. As there has been no angry feeling exhibited on the present occasion, I abstain from further argument on this part of the case. My Lords, there are many accusations—unfortunately the most usual and general—to which I am exceedingly callous. There are some accusations, however, which I feel deeply. I am insensible, for instance, to all observations respecting

tenacity of office and desire of place, and to any imputation of being actuated by motives either of ambition or of avarice. I do not deny these accusations, because I care little about them, but I should be exceedingly sorry if I could be accused with justice of running from my post on account of the dangers and difficulties of the country, or of abandoning any party in it by whom I had been encouraged and sustained. I own that I have a strong feeling on that subject, and I should indeed be sorry if that reproach were cast upon me with any show of justice. I resigned my office, not because I was abandoned—no, I will not use that harsh expression—by those who usually supported me, but because there had arisen among them a certain amount of doubt, which led me to suppose that I could not any longer conduct the Government either with honour to myself, or with advantage to the country; and I now frankly declare, that I resume office solely because I will not abandon my Sovereign in a situation of difficulty and distress, when demands are made on her with which she ought not to comply—demands which are inconsistent with her sense of honour, and which, if acquiesced in now, would establish a precedent which would render her liable during the remainder of her reign to all the variations of party politics, and would make her domestic life one continued scene of discomfort and unhappiness.

The occasion was too provoking to Lord Brougham's appetite for sarcasm not to be availed of; but the illustrious soldier who led the Opposition in the Peers disdained to sanction angry comment or the expression of any feeling of disappointment; and no vote of disapproval was proposed. In the Commons Sir R. Peel explained at great length the part he had taken, and the motives which had actuated him. He did not conceal his sense of relief from being compelled to undertake the Government under circumstances so embarrassing; and he went out of his way to avow that his great difficulty would have been Ireland. The Home

Secretary boldly defended the advice he had personally given the Queen; and no attempt was made to challenge by a division, even in a House so nearly balanced, the accuracy of his historical appeal to the usage of former reigns. As a matter of party tactics he has since owned that it would have been better had he and his colleagues quitted office in May 1839 instead of waiting till their ranks had been further weakened and their prestige of legislative efficiency lost. But the best answer to the imputation of having acted contrary to the spirit of the constitution lies in the conclusive fact that in neither chamber of the legislature did any one of mark or influence even propose to put the question to the vote.

A suitable opening did not arise for Macaulay's re-entering Parliament until Mr. Abercromby resigned his office for a pension and a peerage, when he was unanimously chosen his successor as representative of Edinburgh. His speech on the hustings had in it an eastern glow of enthusiasm for the good old cause, which disenchanted Radicals and dyspeptic Whigs were not just then accustomed to:—

> I look with pride on all that the Whigs have done for human freedom and for human happiness. I see them now hard pressed, struggling with difficulties, but still fighting the good fight. At their head I see men who have inherited the spirit and the virtues, as well as the blood, of old champions and martyrs of freedom. To those men I propose to attach myself. While one shred of the old banner is flying, by that banner will I, at least be found. Whether in or out of Parliament, whether speaking with that authority which must always belong to the representative of this great and enlightened community, or expressing the humble sentiments of a private citizen, I will to the last maintain inviolate my fidelity to principles which, though they may be borne down for a time by senseless clamour, are yet strong with the strength, and

immortal with the immortality, of truth; and which, however they may be misunderstood or misrepresented by contemporaries, will assuredly find justice from a better age.

The restored administration were resolved to justify their new lease of life. Measures heretofore thought too bold were reconsidered and determined on. Postal reform, though previously commended by a great combination of interests to their attention, had been deferred not from any doubt of its expediency or popularity, but solely because the revenue had recently fallen short of the expenditure, and the Treasury hesitated until fiscal times should mend to try an experiment that even its sanguine and sagacious author did not venture to say could be made without a certain risk of temporary loss. The net receipts from the Post Office were confessedly declining; and notwithstanding the increase in population and trade, were actually less than they had been twenty years before. Mr. Rowland Hill calculated that a uniform penny postage would at first still further reduce the Government receipts by 20 per cent; but he confidently reckoned on a rapid and steady recovery, and incontrovertibly demonstrated the augmented gain that would eventually accrue to the Exchequer. The commercial benefits and social blessings of cheapened communication admitted of no dispute: the only doubt in the minds of the First and Second Lords of the Treasury was whether Parliament would hold them justified, in face of an estimated deficiency for the year of £860,000, in sacrificing £280,000 more; but after the events that had lately occurred, they felt relieved at least from one responsibility, namely, that of hazarding the immediate existence of the Government: and Melbourne agreed with Spring Rice that no selfish consideration aforethought of what might happen, or what might be said of them by their political rivals next year, ought to prevent them giving the nation the advantages of so great a boon. On the 5th of July the Chancellor of the

Exchequer accordingly presented to the House of Commons for adoption the plan of a uniform penny postage. To prepare the way for so great a change, he proposed that till the 1st of January following there should be an uniform charge of fourpence; but thenceforward that, except on late letters, the highest rate should be one penny. Mr. Goulburn moved a resolution deprecating the measure as improvident and rash; and found supporters in Sir R. Peel, Sir J. Graham, Lord Stanley, Sir R. Inglis, Lord Lincoln, Sir J. Pakington, and Mr. Sidney Herbert. Upon a division their objections were overruled by 213 to 113; subsequent efforts to retard the progress of the bill proved ineffectual; and Melbourne, who had awakened to a strong sense of the importance and worth of the project, and who took charge of the measure himself in the Upper House, had the satisfaction of carrying it through all its stages there without any serious difficulty.

Mr. Hill was appointed to superintend the working of the new system; many difficulties in the way of fully developing which had to be encountered. For a few years there was a very considerable loss to the revenue; and when parties changed he was summarily dismissed: but after some time the department were glad to have him recalled. And now after eight-and-thirty years, what has been the result! In 1839 the number of letters transmitted by post in the United Kingdom was 76,000,000; in the first year of reduced charge it had risen to 169,000,000; in the seventh year (the last whose ever increasing crop of benefits Melbourne was permitted to see) it had grown to 260,000,000; in 1876 it amounted to 1,019,000,000, besides 87,000,000 of post cards, and 280,000,000 of book packets and newspapers. It is true that population and wealth and facilities of transit have greatly increased in the thirty-six years' interval; but, making every allowance for these, the change brought about by lowering the rates of postal charge transcends in extent, degree, universality and value, every other fiscal reform of our time.*

* Report of the Postmaster-General, 1876.

Compared with other improvements tending to redress the inequality of conditions, this was ineffably the most democratic, and yet the freest from even the temporary reproach of being accomplished in favour of the many at the cost of the few. The luxury of frequent correspondence was cheapened to the rich by the same act that made the comfort of occasional correspondence accessible for the first time to the poor. The more recent device of postal cards has doubtless proved a further benefit to them; but it is not too much to say that the latter was the offspring of the maturity of the former, and that the half-penny card was begotten by the penny stamp.

The Queen had often urged her minister to introduce some measure for primary education in England. He knew too well how firmly rooted were the jealousies and fears throughout the community that were certain to form hindrances at every step in the way of legislation. The hostility of the Bishops he had grown used to, and the invectives of his temporal critics he did not mind; but with a dwindling majority in the Commons, where the money must be voted, he shrank from proposing a comprehensive scheme of popular instruction; and it was not until after his recall to the head of affairs that he thought it prudent or possible to make a beginning in the great work by which her Majesty had told him she had set her heart upon having her reign remembered. Lansdowne undertook as President of the Council to administer the grants which Parliament might vote in aid of existing schools; and the Home Secretary in a cautious and temperate speech induced the House to appropriate £30,000 a year for the purpose. How quickly the seed thus planted struck root in the nation's heart, and how silently but steadily it throve and grew until in our day its branches overshadow all the land,—but one of all the ministers of 1839 has lived to see.

At the Cabinet of the 15th of June, Palmerston proposed that the French and English squadrons should sail to the Syrian coast instructed to stay hostilities between the Pasha

of Egypt and the Porte. He further proposed that the four Great Powers should insist upon the evacuation of Syria by the Egyptians, and that the Pashalic should be declared hereditary in the family of Mehemet Ali. He urged on the Cabinet that the Sultan would not refuse; and that if the Powers were agreed the Pasha might be forced to comply. But when it was proposed to other Governments Russia refused to forego her right of independent action secured to her by the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi: and if any Christian Power was to fight for the Porte she would be that Power. She would not tolerate Austrian troops being sent to Syria. Hobhouse backed Palmerston's views, and proposed to seize the Pasha's fleet and send it to Malta in case he resisted the allied Powers. But this was objected to as too arbitrary; though he was already threatening Bassora, if not Bagdad. It was agreed that England should invite the co-operation of France, Austria, and Russia, and that the Admiral in the Levant should hold himself in readiness to sail with the French fleet to the coast of Syria.

As compensation to Spring Rice for his late disappointment, a peerage was conferred upon him with the Comptrollership of the Exchequer recently vacant. It was an office which, under the title of Auditor, had long been considered as in the special gift of the Premier, either as one of dignified retirement from party action without quitting public life, or as a means of providing for a relative or friend. Mr. Perceval had bestowed it on his brother, and Lord Grenville had taken it himself. To the second place at the Board of Treasury Melbourne proposed to promote the Financial Secretary, Mr. Francis Baring. Lansdowne and Russell concurred fully in the fitness of these arrangements: Lord Howick alone objected, and intimated his intention to retire if the Comptrollership were thus disposed of. Spring Rice saw no reason to waive a third time claims which the chiefs of his party had repeatedly declared to be paramount on the score of long and varied public service. The Premier laid the whole of the circumstances before the Queen. He could not

recommend that in deference to objections raised by one member of the Cabinet, which others did not share, the interests of a friend and colleague so long relied on should be sacrificed. The appointment was made accordingly; and Spring Rice was created Lord Monteagle.*

It soon became evident that the new Secretary of State was unequal to the task of directing the difficult and diversified affairs of a vast colonial empire. He had neither the knowledge requisite nor the industry to acquire it, the calmness of judgment or the comprehensiveness of view:—

> I never found myself in a greater difficulty than about these arrangements. The Colonial Office forms it principally. It is so hard, nay, almost impossible to compose it so as to be equal to its duties or to command confidence. Normanby prefers to have Ward for Secretary. To this the greatest objection is felt by many, and upon the whole I do not see any mode of arranging the affair except by acceding to John Russell's views, placing him at the Colonial Office and Normanby at the Home. I see the objections to Ward, but they are not so strong as to the other course. They are objections of feeling and prejudice, whereas the firm and effective management of the Colonies is vital to the interests of the empire.†

Matters did not mend in Downing Street, and it was impossible to leave Canada, Jamaica, South Africa, and the Ionian Islands to the desultory attention of a mere man of fashion. The President of the Council was abroad when the following reached him:—

> I think by this time you will have received the letters which I wrote to you some time ago, respecting the interchange

* The circumstances were mentioned by Lord Russell to several of his friends, after his renouncing the attempt to form an administration in December 1845. Letter from Lord Monteagle to Lord Lansdowne, December 22nd, 1845.

† To Lord Lansdowne, August 19th, 1839.

of offices between Normanby and John Russell, which was yesterday carried into effect, and as far as I can collect or observe excites less disapprobation than I had expected. The wisdom of John's going to the Colonial Office is generally admitted, and with respect to the other, whatever may be thought, it is not easy to argue that a man is fit to be Secretary of State for one department and not for the other. Normanby will have a difficult task in the renewal of the Poor Law Act, and in carrying into effect the Irish poor law, but we must keep him up and assist him to the best of our power. This change, however, with other causes of discontent, has led to the resignation of Howick under the strong advice and persuasion of Lord Grey, and his resignation has been followed very reluctantly, and more upon private than upon public grounds, by that of Charles Wood. Sir George Grey too, although he will retain his office, is unwilling under these new circumtances to enter the Cabinet; and the Chancellor upon reconsideration has some doubts (they appear to me to be faint ones) of the propriety of placing the Judge Advocate in the Cabinet. Under these circumstances it appears to John Russell and me, and also, I believe, to all the rest of us who are here, that the best course for filling up the vacant offices and obtaining strength is to offer Macaulay to be Secretary at War with a seat in the Cabinet, and Clarendon the Privy Seal. We did not like, however, to take so important a step without your knowledge and approbation, and therefore we have despatched a special messenger to you in order that we may receive your answer before we proceed further in the business. Both Macaulay and Clarendon would be very great acquisitions. They would strengthen us greatly where we are weakest, and I have no doubt myself that we can do no better. With respect to minor arrangements, Vernon Smith goes to the Colonial Department, Moore O'Farrell to the Admiralty, Robert Gordon to the Treasury, the seats at the India Board we have not yet filled up. When you left us you

must have expected changes, and it appears to me that we shall be well off if they go no further than they have gone. We have dreadfully heavy and continued rains at a period of the harvest not much beyond the middle of it, even in these counties much corn is still exposed here, and all is so in the north: this is fearful.*

To make room for Clarendon, Duncannon intimated his willingness to relinquish the Privy Seal, which he had held, since April 1835, along with the Chief Commissionership of Woods and Forests: the latter he retained. Morpeth was rewarded for his services in Ireland, and the new President of the Board of Trade (Labouchere) for the ability he had manifested in the trying controversies regarding colonial affairs, by admission to the Cabinet. Sheil became Vice-President with the rank of Privy Councillor, a distinction with which he was particularly pleased. Most of the new promotions were of men who supported the Ballot, at that time a nominal rather than real line of distinction between the more and the less advanced sections of the party. Those who knew the real sentiments of the men laughed at the fear of progress being too much accelerated by them; and the Premier was not to be deterred from widening the gates of promotion by imputations which he well knew to be groundless. The ministerial leader in the Commons, with characteristic courage, undertook the most arduous post in the Government, namely, that of Minister for Colonial Affairs. Except by Huskisson for a few months, it had not previously been held by any one on whom the general management of business in the Lower House devolved; and there were not wanting cautious friends of judgment and experience who, looking at the troubled state of Canada and the West Indies and the difficulties beginning to be felt in remoter dependencies of the empire, would have dissuaded Lord John from making the exchange.† He did not himself, however,

* September 8th, 1839.

† Letter from Lord Monteagle, August 30th, 1839.

fear the augmented responsibility and labour; and his chief had a thorough confidence that what he undertook he would fulfil.

On his arrival in town in September, Macaulay found a letter from the Premier offering him the Secretaryship at War with a seat in the Cabinet. It was the consummation of the darling hope of his political life, and he affected no hesitation in his reply; his only stipulation being that he should be free to vote as heretofore for the Ballot. The office still remained what it had been when filled by Palmerston from 1808 to 1828, one of secondary rank, its duties being chiefly those connected with military finance and commissariat. The direction and disposal of the army lay with the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies; who in organising movements of importance was bound to consult the Premier; in continental expeditions, the Minister for Foreign Affairs; and where India was concerned, the President of the Board of Control; but who on more than one memorable occasion did not think it necessary to confer with the rest of his colleagues. The brilliant orator and essayist had neither the pretension or ambition to aspire to power of this description, power which in truth can only be exercised beneficially to the public by a man possessing administrative talents in an eminent degree. To these Macaulay had no claim, and his pride was fully satisfied by being invited to join the confidential council of the Crown before he attained his fortieth year; without family connection, the repute of opulence or the possession of landed estate. What Burke and Sheridan, Francis and Mackintosh, had sighed and laboured for in vain was spontaneously accorded him as a man of letters, whom the great constituencies of Leeds and Edinburgh had chosen for their representative. No doubt the minister desired to strengthen his resources in debate; no doubt the personal friendship of Russell and Spring Rice, still more of Lansdowne, contributed to Macaulay's elevation. But the credit is due to Melbourne of being the first Premier since the death of

Stanhope who opened the doors of the Cabinet to one who was simply and merely a man of letters. To mark if possible more emphatically the practical change which had come over the administrative spirit of the time, Sheil and Macaulay were sworn members of the Privy Council on the same day. As the guest of her Majesty, Macaulay, unfortunately for his reputation, had the folly to date his address to his constituents for re-election, from Windsor Castle. Even after the lapse of years, it seems almost incredible how a critic so wise and a constitutionalist so punctilious should have been betrayed into such an error in point of taste, self-respect, and representative independence. The penalty he endured from the lash of public ridicule was indeed severe. Party opponents revelled in the opportunity to jest and jibe, and his truest friends were those who felt most keenly his mistake.

Melbourne's unbelief in the prognostics commonly held forth by eager politicians was in private frequently expressed. "Our ablest men," he used to say, "or at least our ablest in debate, seem to be the most stinted by nature in the quality of foresight. Look at what has occurred with respect to the Catholic question: what all the clever men, Whigs and Tories, foretold as the consequences of emancipation has been falsified, and religious rancour influences party politics nearly as much as did before." Yet nobody could explain with more caustic force and point how the tranquillising effects hoped for from emancipation had been baffled by its long delay. He loved paradox, and found infinite amusement in startling orthodox convictions from what he used to call their unsafe roost. His amazement was often unaffected at the confidence, real or rhetorical, professed by those about him in the effects of measures debated long in council, and at last adopted only on a balance of conflicting considerations.

The Cabinet of 1835 consisted of twelve members only; when reconstructed in September 1839 it contained fifteen; the holders of the Great Seal, the Privy Seal,

and the Irish Secretaryship furnishing the additional number.

The political article in the autumn number of the *Edinburgh*, by Sir E. Lytton Bulwer, defended the measures of the session as cordially as they were condemned in the *Quarterly*, which counselled bolder tactics to the Opposition, and warned Sir Robert Peel that he might one day be displaced by a more energetic leader. The new postal law had the honour of a separate invective to itself, in which Mr. Croker confidently foretold its speedy and complete failure with the vehemence that was his wont. The ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer knew better what to anticipate from the change, and thought the attacks upon his late colleagues "furious and weak." He was much more concerned at the prospect of an insufficient corn harvest than the continued drain of gold from the Bank.* The article in the *Edinburgh* on the first Government grant for education in England was written by him.

* Letter to Lord Lansdowne at Vienna, October 19th, 1839.

CHAPTER XI.

MARRIAGE OF THE QUEEN.

Questions of precedency — Clarendon and Macaulay — Death of Drummond—Lord Stanley's Registration Bill—Syrian Question —Thirlwall a Bishop.

The most delicate yet least difficult of duties now devolved upon the minister,—to advise regarding the marriage of the Queen. By his conduct on this supreme concern his great but not his only rival in personal influence at Court had always felt that the genuineness of his devotion would be most truly tested and ought to be historically judged. If from individual or party motives Melbourne desired to postpone a decision on which the happiness of the sovereign and the welfare of the nation must so greatly depend, the Duke of Wellington believed that he might easily have found reasons specious, if not unanswerable, for such counsel. Her Majesty was still very young, and might not be prepared without further time for consideration to make an irrevocable choice. Even were it made, and confidentially communicated to her family and chief adviser, pretexts innumerable might doubtless be assigned for deprecation or delay. It was impossible, from the peculiar nature of the case, that the position of the minister should not be essentially changed from the day that the royal confidence was given and given for life to one who, whatever his virtues or talents might be, must be a total stranger to the recollections and the hopes, the party interests and the party

feelings of English life. What the future Consort of the Queen might think, or say, or do, no one could pretend to conjecture. His likings or dislikings, his preferences or prejudices, his reliance or reserve were all certain more or less to influence in time to come the conduct of affairs; and it was hard to surmise what these or any of them would be. Would a man who had had the rare fortune of enjoying for the two freshest years of royal life the full measure of unqualified confidence frankly advise and sincerely promote the taking of a step not absolutely requisite as a matter of public policy, and not counselled or suggested from any influential quarter as of early expediency? The Duke was not unaware of the direction whence a princely consort was likely to come; and to whatever extent he believed the rumours that already prevailed, he must have felt that plausible excuses on the score of youth and inexperience might have been assigned for procrastination. Prince Albert was in fact a few months younger than the Queen; he had hitherto had comparatively little opportunity of acquiring what is called a knowledge of the world; and with public business, civil or military, he was wholly unacquainted. Melbourne pondered all these things too; and with King Leopold had discussed gravely and anxiously all the contingencies and exigencies of the occasion. Like him he had formed the conviction that it would be best for the comfort, security, and honour of his confiding mistress that she should bestow her hand on her cousin, young as he was, and trust to her pure, gentle, and exalted influence to complete the formation of his character and disposition. To say that he did not feel it to be a perilous venture, would be to call him flatterer or fool. It was his most exquisite pride to be, and to be recognised as being, the faithful and affectionate friend of the Queen. He foresaw clearly enough the power he was surrendering, but once convinced that the proper time had come, he resolved to suffer no impediment removable by him to stand in the way.

In the beginning of October Prince Albert and his brother

the Duke of Saxe Coburg were invited to Windsor. They remained some weeks, and during their stay all was arranged. When her Majesty informed the Premier of her decision, he expressed the greatest satisfaction, and his confident belief that the announcement would be received with pleasure and approval by the nation. Having communicated the fact to the Cabinet, the Privy Council in accordance with precedent, were summoned for the 23rd of November to receive from her Majesty in person the intimation of her purpose in a matter deeply affecting the welfare of the realm.

In a letter to the Queen the Prince expressed a strong desire that his household should comprise men of both parties, and, if possible, should consist of persons generally recognised as having done good service to the State. Many considerations which probably did not then occur to him influenced the selection actually made. Mr. Anson, who for some time had been the minister's most confidential private secretary, was recommended by him to perform the same function for the Prince. It is said by his biographer that the nomination caused some disappointment, as jarring with his wish to commence his career in England without the appearance of exclusive or sectional surroundings. But it must be remembered that the obligations of Melbourne to consider the theoretical desires of the Prince could not outweigh his sense of duty to his political friends, who implicitly trusted him in all that concerned the stability of the administration; and, taking all things into account, it would certainly have been deemed imprudent if not quixotic in him to have placed in the first instance next the person of the illustrious stranger, one of the party who daily and hourly avowed their anxiety for his overthrow and the subversion of the policy he had been placed and kept in power to defend. George Anson was a tried, discreet, and sensible man, high-bred in feeling as in bearing; capable, without prompting, of giving good advice when asked, and incapable of the folly of making a suggestion when it was not wanted. He had been trained, in short, in no ordinary school what to

do, and not to do, what to hear as though he heard it not, and what to observe and be ready to recall if necessary, as though, in the meanwhile, he remembered not. How completely he disarmed any sentiment of distrust by his tact, temper, and fidelity is well known. If any one felt eventually jealousy or disappointment, it was not the Prince; but the grave has closed over all, with misapprehensions and misgivings that perhaps are ineradicable from relations so delicate and so peculiar: and who of generous and chastened feelings would ask explanations that never can be given?

There were Court perplexities and rivalries to be considered, and, if possible, avoided in anticipation of the new order of things. The King of Hanover was on this, as on all other occasions, little disposed to be accommodating:—

I received your letter this morning. I have written to the King of Hanover to make the proposal you suggest, and if he refuses it, I think we should take his apartments. What I take him to mean by his letter to Duncannon is this: I retain my house because there are such things going on in England, that it may be necessary for me to return thither. And absurd as this may be, there are not wanting persons here who would commend him in that view. This is avoided by offering him apartments at Kensington. Precedence at the marriage cannot be given by authority. It must be conceded by those who are entitled to it. This may perhaps be managed; but it will not do to attempt to place him before the Queen-Dowager. I have got Holland to write to the Duke of Sussex. I fear he is more likely to persuade the Duke of Cambridge than the Duke of Cambridge him. Neither of them are very strong, but Sussex is the strongest.*

On the 20th of January a bill was brought in regulating the legal status, rank, and dignity of the Prince. Some

* December 26th, 1839.

difference of opinion seemed likely to arise on certain points of precedency; but it was felt on both sides to be desirable to avoid, if possible, any controversy in Parliament that might be imputed to party feeling. The bill as framed unconditionally gave Prince Albert the first place in the realm next to the throne during the term of his natural life, and had he survived the Queen without issue he would have taken precedence of the eldest son of the Heir Presumptive. This Lord Lyndhurst and other friends of King Ernest would not allow. The Duke of Sussex also, as appears from a confidential note of Lord Monteagle, was disposed to stand for what he called the rights of his family.* The committee on the bill was deferred, in order to give time for consideration, and in the hope that some agreement might be come to in the interim. The Premier had recently added to his Cabinet a diplomatist of distinction, whose services were now put in requisition.

Lord Clarendon, who in 1838 had succeeded his uncle in his title and estates, returned from Spain in October, and in January 1840 was made Lord Privy Seal. In earlier life, as Commissioner of Excise, he had been personally known to the Duke of Wellington, and during his brief tenure of the Foreign Office in 1835 had received from his Grace more than one expression of confidence and good-will; and now that their relative positions were changed, it became easier for him than some other members of the Government to communicate informally with the leader of the Opposition in the Lords, on subjects of delicacy in which neither of the great parties of the State could have any motive to disregard the susceptibilities of the Court. Lord Clarendon therefore called at Apsley House, and during his visit received intimations wrapped in no surplusage of diplomatic phrase that the Duke liked Melbourne, believed him to be actuated by feelings worthy of his position, and deserving of support wherever party honour did not inter-

* January 2nd, 1840.

fere. The Premier was not wanting in words of due acknowledgment:—

I received from Lord Clarendon an account of the conversation which passed yesterday between him and your Grace upon the subject of Prince Albert's precedence. I could not but be highly gratified by the report which he made of the tone and feelings of your Grace's observations; although I was deeply concerned to find that upon the substance of the question itself there was so wide a difference between us. As we have, however, but one object in view, and that is to settle the matter as quickly and with as little discussion as possible, your Grace will feel that nothing could be so conducive to the attainment of this end, as that we should be acquainted before the question comes on, with the course which your Grace intends to take, and have the means of deliberating upon it. If your Grace aquiesces in this view, you will perhaps be kind enough to favour me with this information.*

In the course of the evening he received the following reply:—

Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the prospect of putting an end to all discussion on the Precedency Bill. I requested Lord Lyndhurst this day to have two amendments prepared, one in the hypothesis of Prince Albert being created a Peer; the other in the hypothesis of his not being created a Peer. I expect to receive these proposed amendments early in the morning. I will send them to your Lordship for your consideration, as soon as I shall have received them.†

Next morning brought a further note of Lord Lyndhurst's amendments, which seemed to have dealt exclusively with

* From South Street, February 2nd, 1840.

† February 2nd, 1840, half-past 7 P.M..

the question whether or not it was intended to create the Prince a Peer:—

First.—In case no intimation should be conveyed of the intention to create Prince Albert a Peer, after the words natural life in the third clause of the Bill, insert the words such precedence; and that before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and all other great officers, and the Dukes other than and except the Dukes of the Blood Royal, and all other Peers of this Realm as her Majesty shall deem fit and proper, any law, statute, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

Second.—In case an intimation should be conveyed of the intention to create Prince Albert a Peer, such intimation should be inserted in the third clause, and after the word celebrated, the words created a peer of this realm should be inserted, it shall be lawful, should follow. After the words natural life insert such precedence and rank in and out of the Lords House of Parliament before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and all the great officers and Dukes other and except the Dukes of the Blood Royal, and all other Dukes of this Realm as her Majesty shall deem fit and proper, any law, statute, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

There was no intention of conferring on the royal bridegroom the dignity of a peerage which would only have given him a seat in the Upper House, junior to the four-and-twenty dukes already existing. But the effect of the proposed amendment was to order by statute that the King of Hanover as Duke of Cumberland, the Duke of Sussex, and the Duke of Cambridge, and after the death of each respectively his son and successor, should take precedence of the future husband of the Queen. This was not what ministers could agree to, and the controversy was only got rid of by the clauses regarding precedency being wholly withdrawn, leaving no other provisions remaining than those requisite for naturalisation.

In the memorable struggle which arose between the Commons and the courts of law, on the subject of privilege, the Melbourne Cabinet stood firmly for the rights of either House of Parliament to print and publish matter of any kind whatsoever at its discretion. For printing and circulating the report of a Select Committee on Prisons which stigmatised a certain book as "disgusting and obscene" its publisher, J. J. Stockdale, brought an action against Messrs. Hansard, whose plea of authorization was disallowed by Lord Denman on the ground that no order of the House of Commons could justify the publication of a libel. Damages were assessed at £600, which the Sheriffs of Middlesex were directed by the Court of Queen's Bench to pay over to the plaintiff. The House summoned them to appear at the bar;* commanded them to refund the money to the defendants, and committed them for contempt of its privileges for hesitating to do so. A writ of *habeas corpus* required the Serjeant-at-Arms to bring the imprisoned Sheriffs into court, where their submission that they could not disobey the order of Parliament was allowed, and they were remanded to Newgate. After weeks spent in discussing the conflict of jurisdictions, on the 5th of March a bill was brought in by Lord J. Russell, and carried by 149 to 106, interdicting all further procedure in pending suits; and for the future rendering the privilege of either House a legal warrant for the report of any words spoken within its walls or the circulation of any document laid upon its table; the majority of the Opposition in both Houses loudly protesting, and Brougham most loudly and vehemently of all. But Sir Robert Peel on one side and O'Connell on the other concurred in maintaining the supreme and absolute privilege of Parliament to say by word of mouth or print of type whatever touched the welfare and safety of the realm; and Melbourne entered heartily into the great contention, speaking his best and showing a truly liberal comprehension of the important issues it involved. Easily tired of the shallows

* January 18th, 1840.

of vulgar controversy, he liked to feel the deep waters under him. For practice at the bar as a younger son, he had read no more than idlers generally do; but after he had ceased to think of law as a profession he studied deeply and thoughtfully all of it that a statesman ought to know. His knowledge of constitutional as of ecclesiastical history was profound; and his respect for the traditions of the best periods of parliamentary life was cordial and true—he hated subversive novelties and whatever tended to unsettle needlessly the minds of the community; and he therefore wished to confirm and strengthen all the powers of Parliament as the best of guarantees for all other liberties. He saw that the political ascendency of class was going and that the political prerogative of the Crown was gone; and he clung therefore more than ever to the policy of combining, equalising, and strengthening the privileges of the two Houses of Parliament as the only bulwark left, as he used to say, against the fitful raging of the sea—the fitful madness of the people.

He was congratulating himself on the termination of the controversy by the liberation of the sheriffs* under an order of the House, when tidings reached him by telegraph of an event which inflicted on the administration an unexpected and irreparable blow. Letters from Ireland had mentioned on the previous day that the illness of Mr. Drummond had suddenly assumed a serious character; but his comparative youth, the natural strength of his constitution, and the vivacity of his communications on various matters of importance, up to the end of the preceding week, forbade any thought of alarm concerning his condition. Few at a distance understood how deeply the continued strain of five years' overwork had undermined the stability of his frame, and rendered him a too easy prey to inflammatory disease. Indefatigable in the discharge of his arduous duties, he rode into Dublin as usual on the morning of the 11th of April, and though feeling unwell, remained at the Castle until

* April 15th, 1840.

after dark, having been actively engaged without intermission for more than nine hours. Next morning he had recourse to medical aid; but skill and care proved unavailing, and after much suffering, but without losing self-possession, he sank at last a victim to his devotion to the service of his adopted country. Seldom has sympathy or sorrow been more generally evinced in Ireland for the loss of a public man. The bickerings of party contention were hushed when it became known that his life was in danger, and on the announcement of his premature decease an universal sense of sadness seemed to overspread all classes of the community. His remains were followed to the grave by the Viceroy, the Duke of Leinster, the Archbishop of Dublin, Lord Morpeth, and many other persons of distinction; while the pall was borne by Lord Plunket, four of the judges, and Sir John Burgoyne. To his mother Lord Ebrington wrote:—

> How severe your affliction must be I can but too well understand, after the opportunities which I derived from our daily and confidential intercourse of observing those noble and endearing qualities of heart and mind, which made me feel for him quite the affection of a brother.

His old chief, whom he had recently visited at Althorp, and who was not a man given to words of exaggerated eulogy, wrote:—

> If ever a man died for his country he did so, and that country ought not, and I believe will not be sparing in its expressions of gratitude to his memory. I knew that the labour he was going through was beyond human endurance, and I urged him to take the first opportunity to retire from his position in Ireland and come into Parliament, and he promised me he would do so. My loss is great indeed in the loss of such a friend; the loss of the country is great in the loss of such a public man. It was under the extra labour (self-)imposed on him by two

great works—his report on the railway system for Ireland, and his re-organisation of the constabulary force—that his health broke down. He died, therefore, for his country, and he died doing her as great good as any one man ever effected.*

The clear-sighted and disinterested statesman from his retirement would fain have encouraged his friends in office to persist in the endeavour to regenerate Ireland physically and socially in the manner traced by Drummond. But unhappily no successor worthy to be named with him took his place; and the splendid project of a complete system of national railways like that which the legislature of Belgium had created was allowed to drop under the veto of Sir Robert Peel. Seven years had not passed until famine smote the ill-fated land; and it is not too much to say the misery and loss and shame attendant thereupon were rendered threefold deeper by the want of cheap and rapid means of communication, which a comprehensive railway system would have supplied. Instead of better and cheaper highways, the opponents of the Melbourne Government proposed to take away some of the scanty and inadequate franchises conferred on Ireland by the Reform Act.

Lord Stanley undertook to introduce a measure for the registration of voters on the western side of the Channel that would have the effect of materially curtailing the constituencies, which, though comparatively small, returned seventy supporters of ministers out of one hundred and five members. The second reading was carried by a majority of 250 to 234;† but popular opinion was so quickly aroused to what was regarded as the disclosure of reactionary designs, that in a much fuller house the motion to go into committee was only carried (through the desertion of half-a-dozen Liberals) by a majority of three; and at the close of the session no effectual progress had been made with

* Private Letter from Earl Spencer, April 26th, 1840.

† March 26th, 1840.

the bill. But the exasperation of party feeling which its protracted discussion caused was not soon to pass away. An article in the *Examiner* affixed to its author the epithet of "Scorpion Stanley," while the *Times* recommended the curtailment of the popular suffrage as necessary to diminish the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy, whom it stigmatised as "surpliced ruffians." Melbourne deplored the violence of language used on both sides; but still more the adoption by the Opposition leaders of a policy which he declared they would repudiate whenever they came into power. Stanley might possibly deceive himself as to the practicability of undoing what had been done in 1832 towards the establishment of something like the semblance of equal franchises throughout the United Kingdom; but Peel and Graham could not be so deceived, and neither of them would in office think of enacting what they now reproached his Cabinet with refusing to enact. If by outbidding them with measures they meant to carry, they could attain power, he never would complain; but he resented bitterly the tactics thus pursued, and he had not long to wait for the realisation of his disdainful anticipations.* Under every change of circumstance he continued to entertain a greater respect for the impetuous lieutenant than the more far-sighted chief; and the language in which he was accustomed to speak of them in private always indicated this preference.

> For a long time, says Lord Russell, Palmerston had observed total silence with respect to his views on the complications of the East; but 1840 witnessed his diplomatic ability and success as a statesman.†

In full detail he explained to the Cabinet the imminency of the danger to which the advance of Ibrahim Pasha's army exposed the Turkish empire, and he asked for authority to

* A few months after the change of ministry, Sir James Graham, in reply to a question in Parliament, declared that looking at the restricted state of the Irish constituencies they could not bring in any measure resembling Lord Stanley's bill.

† 'Recollections and Suggestions,' ch. ii. p. 259.

conclude a treaty for its protection against the subversive designs of the Pasha of Egypt, who was known to rely for encouragement and aid on France. Lord Holland and Lord Clarendon favoured the French alliance, and deprecated the policy which they believed would bring it to an end. The majority in the Cabinet sided cordially with Palmerston.

By Mr. Ellice and other intimates of Holland House M. Guizot was assured that his Government had nothing to apprehend in the way of open interference by England, acting alone or in concert with the other great Powers, and Louis Philippe relied on these assurances implicitly. Time pressed, the Egyptian army continued to advance through Syria, and should any very great reverse occur to the forces of the Sultan, the collapse of the Ottoman power might be irretrievable; and the attempt to withhold Russia from dividing the spoil would come too late. Palmerston accordingly addressed to Melbourne, as head of the Government, a masterly exposition of his policy, on which he desired a decision without delay, as in case of its rejection he must ask to be relieved of the responsibility of office. He sent a copy to Lord John, by whom it was promptly and cordially approved. But should Holland be hastily betrayed into resigning, the administration, already weakened by secession, would probably come to an end. The leader of the Commons, therefore, urged the Premier to give time for deliberation and conference with the dissentient minority. The result was that Palmerston carried his point; the secret of the Quadruple Treaty was loyally kept until it had been actually signed, and M. Guizot was obliged to confess to his Court that he had been wholly misinformed. Instructions were already on their way to Admiral Stopford and Sir Charles Napier to warn the Egyptian army back, and in any event protect Constantinople. Ibrahim's victorious progress was arrested, and within a few months Mehemet Ali was content to make peace on terms not inconsistent with the preservation of the suzerainty of the Porte. When Parliament met in the following spring it readily indemnified the minister for

assumptions of authority whose wisdom was vindicated by success; and though differences in council were felt warmly and argued vehemently, they were never suffered to disturb the friendship and esteem of colleagues who had been so long united.

Each step of the negotiations was previously communicated to her Majesty, whose good-will towards Louis Philippe never led her to hesitate about sanctioning the policy which national interests seemed to require. Although entailing oftentimes a serious addition to the other cares and labours of State, the Queen has invariably desired to be made fully acquainted with the nature and character of diplomatic dealings of importance with foreign Powers; and it is no more than a just acknowledgment of steadfastness of royal patriotism to say that no minister who succeeded Melbourne ever failed to find the ready and cordial sympathy in the nation's wants and wishes which is the best guerdon of a people's trust and loyalty.

The death of Bishop Jenkinson drew upon Melbourne once more the convergent fire of clerical importunities; but to none was the offer of St. David's crozier sent, of the many who relied on parliamentary influence or family claims,—and to none did it occasion more surprise than the unambitious object of the Premier's choice. In 1834 Connop Thirlwall, then a distinguished fellow and tutor of Trinity, had published a pamphlet in favour of admitting dissenters to the University; and in combating the objections usually urged, he had spoken freely of the perfunctory services in College Chapel, and the notoriously undevotional character of the attendants. Great offence was taken by some at these observations, and Dr. Wordsworth, then master, addressed to him a letter of rebuke, in which he pronounced the avowal of such opinions incompatible with his position as tutor. Thirlwall indignantly resigned, to the great regret of both the senior and junior fellows who knew his educational worth, and condemned the censure passed upon him as wholly unwarrantable. He continued to reside at Cambridge, and to take

part in the examination for fellowships, while more than ever he applied himself to literary pursuits. In 1825 he had published a translation of Schleiermacher's Gospel of St. Luke, which did not escape animadversion by certain ecclesiastical critics. In concert with his friend Julius Hare, he likewise undertook the translation of Niebuhr's History of Rome, the influence of which in modifying established opinions it is not easy to over-estimate.* Before the change of Government in 1834, he made up his mind to take the College living of Kirkby Lonsdale in Yorkshire, where he lived contentedly surrounded by his books and devoted to the cares of his parish. Every summer he went abroad or into Wales, his pastoral duties being taken during his absence by one or other of the friends at Cambridge to whom he was endeared.† It thus fell out that when a letter franked by the First Minister reached the Rectory the owner was absent, and his servants knew not where he was to be found. One of his intimates, Mr. J. A. Barnes, undertook to find him, but for some days searched in vain. At length as he passed after nightfall a village inn, his eyes rested on a shadow on the window-blind, cast by a strong light within. He could not be mistaken. "My man at last," he said; and entering, presented the letter which made his unexpectant friend a spiritual peer. Thirlwall's first impulse was to refuse. He was anxious to complete his History of Greece, and was meditating a visit to the land of art and song during the autumn. It is said to have taken all the power of suasion by his friends to make him agree to be a bishop. His hesitation somehow became known, and it tended to confirm the conviction that he who was least anxious for promotion was most deserving of it.

He called at South Street as he had been asked to do; and on finding that the minister had not yet risen, was about to leave his card, when he was told that directions

* Published 1828–1831.

† Letter from Dr. W. H. Thompson, Master of Trinity, June 14th, 1877.

had been given that he was to be shown in whenever he happened to come. Melbourne was in bed surrounded with letters and newspapers.

Very glad to see you; sit down, sit down: hope you are come to say you accept. I only wish you to understand that I don't intend if I know it to make a heterodox bishop. I don't like heterodox bishops. As men they may be very good anywhere else, but I think they have no business on the bench. I take great interest, he continued, in theological questions, and I have read a good deal of those old fellows, pointing to a pile of folio editions of the Fathers. They are excellent reading and very amusing; some time or other we must have a talk about them. I sent your edition of Schleiermacher to Lambeth, and asked the Primate to tell me candidly what he thought of it; and look, here are his notes in the margin; pretty copious, you see. He does not concur in all your opinions; but he says there is nothing heterodox in your book.

This was peculiarly gratifying to the visitor, for Archbishop Howley was a great scholar and a great churchman; and hated with all his heart the multiplication of Whig suffragans in his province: but he was a just man, and bore his testimony according to the faith that was in him. Briefly and without blandishment, Thirlwall responded to the appeal thus made to his sense of religious honour. He valued highly the confidence implied in being unexpectedly sought out to fill the vacant see, and nothing could be more alien to his feelings than any reservation of conscience or thought of insincerity in accepting it. Melbourne was satisfied that he had chosen the right sort of man; and after an episcopate of five-and-thirty years the public judgment has notably ratified his choice.

It must be owned that Melbourne had a wayward love of paradox; and once in the vein, he would defend his position, if vigorously assailed, with an infinite variety of

weapons, heavy and light, coarse and refined, sentimental and sardonic, as the whim prompted. Then would come a fit of abstraction, ending frequently in broken monologue, quaint, odd, at times unintelligible to his wondering hearers, and at times more explicit than agreeable. On other occasions the ice would break up even in more startling fashion, and he would pour forth a torrent of animated talk about something that nobody else who was present had been thinking of; or abruptly ask a question ever so remote from the current topic of the hour. The habit of talking to himself aloud, which used to amuse him so much in his early friend Dudley, gained upon him as he advanced in years. Coming out of the morning room at Brooks's one day, an acquaintance whom he did not notice observed him stop short in the middle of the hall, and after a few minutes heard him say, loud enough for any one to hear, "I'll be hanged if I'll do it for you, my lord." A still more curious instance used to be told by the late Lord Hardwicke, who happened to be engaged in writing at a table in the library of the Lords, when the House broke up somewhat sooner than was expected after the first angry debate on the Non-Intrusion question in Scotland. The annual discussions on the Irish Appropriation had not long been brought to an end, when this new ecclesiastical turmoil burst forth unexpectedly in another part of the realm. He had listened with curiosity, regret, pain, and at length with dismay, to the outbreak of contending prejudices and passions among the peers from beyond the Tweed; and his carriage not having come when the contention ceased, he threw himself into an easy-chair opposite the fire in the library and relieved his pent-up soul with the exclamation, "God bless me! what's to be done now? I had only just settled that confounded Irish Church question, when earth yawns and here comes up a devilish worse one about the Scotch Church." At dinner at Holland House one day, he suddenly apostrophised a young nobleman recently returned from France, and who was seated at the opposite side of the

table,—"Don't you consider it was a most damnable act of Henri IV. to change his religion with a view to securing the Crown?" Lord H. Vane assented; but nobody else had been thinking of the gay King of Navarre, and nobody could discover what could have provoked the question.

Towards the end of June it became necessary to consider how provisions should be made by statute for appointing a Regency to guard against the contingency of the demise of the Crown, or such indisposition of her Majesty as would prevent her attending to affairs of State. Melbourne knew that he could rely on the devotion of the Duke to the Queen to aid in preventing, if possible, invidious or useless discussion on the subject; and he resolved to offer in person to confer confidentially with him as to what should be done. According to his wont the Duke noted carefully in his own hand what took place at the interviews between himself and the minister at Apsley House, for it appears there was more than one:—

I received a note from Lord Melbourne in which he informed me, that he wished to speak to me on the subject of the Regency; and that he would call upon me at twelve o'clock, if he should not receive an intimation of my wish that he should not. He came; and immediately asked me what I thought upon the subject. I asked him what his own opinion was. He said that it appeared absolutely necessary to provide for the exercise of the royal authority in case of any misfortune happening to the Queen, and that she should leave a child alive. That in case of the appointment of a Regency, it was better that it should not be a Council, but a sole Regent, and that considering that the persons exercising the sovereign authority was to be the guardian of the child, it was desirable that the father should be the person selected. I told Lord Melbourne that of course I could not tell him the opinions of others, that I did not know what those opinions were, much less had I authority to state

them. That my own opinion agreed very much with his, and that I thought that he could not do better than follow the precedent of the year 1830. The conversation then turned upon the conduct and character of Prince Albert. I asked him whether he had conversed with his colleagues, and what their opinions were. He said Yes; that they were sensible of the necessity of adopting some such arrangements, but were apprehensive of the difficulties of the question, and of the invidious nature of the discussion, in case there should be any material difference of opinion with respect to the person. The conversation then turned upon other measures which it might be necessary to adopt. First.—Supposing the Queen to be confined to her bed, and unable to sign papers for any length of time. Second.—Supposing her to be alive, but in a state of health to be absolutely incapable of attending to business of any description. Whether in the first case it might be expedient to re-enact the Signet Statute Law of the time of George IV. Whether in the second it might not be expedient to enable her to appoint a Regent as she would if she was absent herself from the kingdom. Lord Melbourne conversed very freely upon all these points. It is evident that he wishes that Prince Albert should be the person. I cannot say that there has been any formal discussion in the Cabinet, or that others are looking to other arrangements; but I think that he apprehends that they may. I repeated that I could not tell him what was the opinion of our friends, but I said that I would communicate with them, and let him know that of the leading men among them if they should permit me.*

Confidence begets confidence, and when the subject was resumed the rival leaders reciprocally laid aside reserve in their communications, written as well as verbal. The session

* Memorandum of conversation between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Melbourne about the Regency, 1840.

was drawing to a close, and something would have to be done. Melbourne wrote accordingly:—

Upon considering this matter of the Regency with my colleagues, we are of opinion that although it is rather a delicate and difficult matter to word such a message, which must be done in very general terms, yet upon precedent and principle it would not do to proceed in such a matter except by message. It seems to me that a matter so immediately concerning the Crown, its dignity and feeling, Parliament should not be called upon to act except by message from the Crown. We shall therefore bring a message down to both Houses to morrow which I hope you will approve. I wrote on Friday to the Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge, informing them of the course intended to be pursued. The Duke of Cambridge spoke to me of it in the House of Lords confidentially, but did not expressly declare his concurrence and approbation. From the Duke of Sussex, I am sorry to say, I received yesterday evening a letter in a very different tone, expressing strong disapprobation, and declaring that he should give the measure his opposition and assert the rights of his family. Believe me yours faithfully.*

Not to be outdone in communicativeness, his Grace ere he slept sent the following reply:—

I write without having time to consult the opinion of others. As I told your Lordship before, there is no doubt upon the principle of the measure proposed. I think the proper mode of bringing it under the consideration of Parliament is by message. The subject is one of delicacy; but it is better that it should originate from the best authority than that there should be any doubt about the necessity for making a provision such as is proposed. I don't hesitate to tell your Lordship that the Duke of Cambridge called upon me yesterday on his way to Kensington, by

* From South Street, July 12th, 1840.

desire of the Duke of Sussex, to see his Royal Highness upon this subject. He left me disposed, apparently determined to support the proposed measure. I don't think that you will experience any difficulty on his part. I entertain no doubt but that your proposition will be supported by a large majority of the House of Lords. I have the honour to be your Lordship's most faithful Servant.*

Had the alternative been whether the Prince Consort or the Duke of Sussex should be named in the Regency Bill, the confluent streams of opinion might perhaps have mingled less rapidly. But if the line of presumptive heirship was to be observed, King Ernest must have been nominated in the bill, and he would have been a profound judge of human nature who could tell whether such a contingency was more unwelcome in the eyes of the learned ex-Chancellor or the illustrious Field Marshal. Nor can it admit of reasonable doubt that if such a proposal had been made it would have been rejected by the House of Commons. The Duke of Sussex was personally popular, and had he been a man of striking talents or conspicuous achievements it is possible that a personal party might have gathered round him and divided the votes of the Commons. But the royal recluse at Kensington if he had no enemies had certainly no following, and none but a wrong-headed flatterer or reckless marplot would have advised him to challenge a proposition which had the cordial assent of every English statesman of the day.

Lord Melbourne called upon me this morning by appointment. I told him that I had communicated with the leading men in the House of Commons, and with Lord Lyndhurst on the subject on which he had spoken to me, and that they were of opinion that in case it should be necessary under existing circumstances to make provision for the exercise of the royal authority, by the appointment of a Regent, the arrangement should be made in con-

* From Apsley House, July 12th, 1840.

formity with the precedent of 1830; that the Regency should be sole, and that the father of the child should be the person selected. I said that there was every disposition to concur in a legislative provision which it might be necessary to make in the bill to enable the Queen to nominate a person to transact such of the public business as she should think it necessary or convenient to have transacted during her Majesty's temporary indisposition or the circumstances in which she was placed. That it appeared that the use of a signet according to the precedent of the reign of George IV. of which he and I had conversed was not considered to be a desirable mode of providing for this exigency by those whose opinion I had consulted. The conversation then turned upon the time at which the measure should be brought under consideration. I think it will be at an early period. It appears that Lord Melbourne's colleagues are pressed by some of the supporters of the Government to put forward the expediency of the Duke of Sussex being employed in this office. I told Lord Melbourne that I did not think that that proposition would be well received, and that I heard that the King of Hanover was thinking of coming to England; and that if anything like a Council of Regency was to be formed and the Duke of Sussex to be a member, his Lordship might rely upon it that propositions would be made to call to the Council of Regency other members of the House of Brunswick.*

At the close of the session Lord Lyndhurst summed up the legislative failures of the Government in a caustic and telling speech which nettled the First Minister exceedingly. Melbourne charged the Opposition, in reply, with reckless abuse of their power to frustrate and delay useful measures, in order that they might have the pretence for complaining how little had been done. He instanced in particular the bill for the reform of the Court of Admiralty which had

* Conversation with Lord Melbourne, July 1st, 1840.

long been required. The bill had improved the position of the Judge and recognised his exceptional right to sit in the House of Commons, a right which few other judicial functionaries enjoyed, and which Brougham denounced as a piece of party favouritism towards the member for the Tower Hamlets, the impartiality of whose decisions might thus be overcast with suspicion. The gratuitous and groundless imputation came with singular infelicity from one whose time in that House was alternately devoted to judgments in appeal and party speeches, and who had peculiar experience of the uprightness and ability of the person he maligned; for Lushington had in other days rendered his assailant valuable professional aid during the Queen's trial and on other occasions.

> I deeply lament, said the Premier, that the hand uplifted to destroy this bill ought, in reason and right feeling, to have been stretched out to save it. And I cannot refrain from saying that its rejection was one of the most disreputable and unprovoked acts of power that I ever knew to be exercised.

He had, however, the satisfaction of at length witnessing the long-delayed enactment of the law giving elective corporations to the cities and towns of Ireland.

Events in Syria had taken their inevitable course under the treaty signed by the four Powers. Ibrahim Pasha's victorious march was arrested, and the taking of Acre by an Anglo-Turkish force under Sir Charles Napier put an end to the dreams of Egyptian ambition. But the anger of France was not easily appeased. Guizot had been self-blindfolded by his own airs of impenetrable conceit, and his royal master, who believed himself to be more astute than any politician of the older Governments of Europe, had been quietly baffled and isolated by a conjoint act of which they had all in vain given him warning. It was certainly a humiliation hard to bear impeturbably, and his daring minister was all for resenting it. There was an interval during which the

English Cabinet (all but Palmerston) felt anxious if they did not look grave.

The session being over, the Duke of Wellington received an invitation to Windsor, where he remained some days.

I visited Lord Melbourne, by his desire, in his room on the 18th, in the morning after breakfast. Upon my entrance, he said, Well! this is a fine situation into which we have brought ourselves! I said, I believe that I was the person who suggested to you and advised you originally to protect the Porte against the usurping aggression of Mehemet Ali. But I think that the difficulties of your position do not turn upon this measure so much as they do upon the mode in which you have endeavoured to execute your purpose. The French are, or pretend to be sorely offended; have collected large armies and fleets, and other means and resources; and they are now driving their sovereign to the necessity of making use of these means in war! In his letter to King Leopold the King complains of being sorely aggrieved, and it is obvious that even he is not unprepared to go to any extremities! I observed to Lord Melbourne, that Lord John Russell would probably have informed him of what I thought of their negotiations, and that I had suggested that it should be carried on in future according to the regular diplomatic forms. I said that at that time I had not known exactly what had passed between Lord Palmerston and the French Ambassador; but I knew that the negotiations had not been carried on according to diplomatic forms. That consequently when charged with having kept France in the dark, and out of the secret, they could not prove what they had communicated, nor what the answer of France had been, nor what had been the proposition of France, or her conduct in respect to the execution of the very measures contained in these propositions; and that this was the real difficulty in which they were placed at this moment. They could give no answer to the complaints of France! particularly

to those of the King! The danger of a war was imminent, they could not prove that they were in the right, they were in no manner prepared for their defence. I said, I conclude that you must endeavour to preserve the peace of the world. Happen what may in respect to the Eastern Question, you must endeavour to preserve peace, for you are in no manner prepared for war. I mentioned the state of the naval means at Portsmouth. I said, Your object must be to bring France back into the alliance. From the peace of 1814, when France discontinued her revolutionary courses, we thought that the only mode of giving permanence and stability to the general peace was to associate France in the general European alliance. I acted upon this principle in 1830, when I at once admitted into the alliance Louis Philippe, upon his declaring that he would carry into execution all the treaties by which Charles X. had been bound. You must renew the negotiations for the settlement of the Eastern Question on a new basis. The Emperor of Russia having agreed not to renew the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Powers of Europe having agreed that the Black Sea should be *Mare Clausum*, propose that the Porte shall have the guard and care of the entrance thereof, under such provisions and regulations as it may be thought proper to propose; and that in order to enable the Porte to perform the duty which her position as well as the interests of Europe require from her, propose that she should be rendered strong and independent by a definition of the state of possession as between the Porte and her vassal Mehemet Ali. That France as well as the other great Powers of Europe should be called upon to regulate and enforce this state of possession at present, and should guarantee it for the future with a view to the permanent security of the other objects.

The independence of the Porte, and the preservation of the state of the Black Sea as *Mare Clausum*,—if Louis Philippe is not gone wild he will adopt this plan, which

is practicable, inasmuch as all the difficult points have been agreed to by the other Powers. During my residence at Windsor Lord Melbourne talked to me on other subjects. I think him quite sound upon the Corn Laws. I think him prepared to adopt the views which I suggested for making further provisions for the parochial clergy as well as for the Church in general. He told me that the Queen was now quite satisfied with the arrangement of the Precedency Question, and with the position in which Prince Albert had been placed in the House of Lords upon the occasion of the prorogation.

In the memorandum which I wrote of what passed on Monday last in conversation with Lord Melbourne, I omitted that he showed me a despatch which had just then been sent to him by Lord Palmerston from the Queen's Minister at Stutgard, in which the latter reports what he had heard of the diplomatic meeting which had taken place at Prince Metternich's in Bohemia, at Kœnigstadt. He writes that the Prince and the other ministers were very much disturbed by the reports which they had received of the violence excited in France by the Quadruple Treaty; of the threats of war, and of the preparations made, the levy of troops, the augmentation of the fleet, and the collection of means for the purpose of carrying on war. That Prince Metternich was thinking of recommending to the Diet apparently to make immediate levy of troops on the part of the Confederation of Germany to the amount of 25,000 men. The curious circumstance attending this despatch is that it represents the feeling at Prince Metternich's château to be entirely different from that which Newman stated to me, and probably to the Government, as prevailing. But I don't believe that Newman knew what Prince Metternich thought after he should have received reports that the King had consented to the armament. Lord Melbourne was very much disturbed by this despatch from Stutgard. He seemed to think that the levy of troops by the German Confederation would lead to an

immediate collision. My opinion is that Prince Metternich wants to move into Italy an additional corps of Austrian troops, which he cannot do unless their stations are taken up by the troops.

It is in Italy that the French threaten to attack the Austrians; but I believe principally by revolutionary means.

France was arming, and an impending rupture seemed to be nigh at hand. Melbourne wrote confidentially to King Leopold expressing his regret that from any cause the intimacy and friendship hitherto subsisting between the two nations should be interrupted. But if the threatened increase of the French army were proceeded with, he would immediately summon Parliament, and take a vote for forty additional sail of the line, which would speedily sweep the seas.* He knew how sincerely the King of the Belgians deprecated war between the two countries, and how certain he was to make good use at Neuilly of whatever it was important to make known. Leopold was perhaps the only confidential adviser of Louis Philippe at the moment who understood the temper of England, and the value to be set on the expressions of her public men. Great efforts had been notoriously employed from this side of the channel to persuade French ministers and journalists that the party of peace at any price was strong; and that in spite of all that Palmerston might wish or say, the majority of the Cabinet would shrink from incurring the responsibility of a collision; and that when France was prepared to commence hostilities they would succumb. Melbourne felt it to be his duty to dispel this illusion. To do so publicly would have been imprudent, if not impossible; and no communication through the Embassy at Paris would probably have had the effect. There was but one unexceptionable and certain way of making the communication, and that was the way he adopted.

* See note of Mr. Anson, August 19th, 1841, quoted by Martin, 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i. p. 231.

Meanwhile it was his business to be more than ordinarily careful of what was said and done, in order at least that surface susceptibilities might be soothed. From Windsor, on the 18th of August, he wrote:—

I shall be glad to hear from you from Ireland. Foreign affairs look very threatening. Guizot comes here to-day, and we shall be able to give a better judgment after having seen him. Louis Philippe is certainly very sore himself, and writes to the King of the Belgians in a very reserved manner, and as if unwilling to commit himself for the future.*

The ambassador did not affect contentment or cordiality, which he owns he did not feel; but his instructions were not to widen the breach between the two Governments, or to compromise the dignity of his own by recrimination or complaint. The narrow range of tone Louis Philippe wished him to observe was less irksome to one of his nature than it would have been to a courtier by education, or to a man of the effusive wit and gaiety of his illustrious rival in the salon and the tribune. With incidents so provocative as those still fresh in every one's recollection, M. Thiers could not have helped indulging in raillery and sarcasm. M. Guizot mutely hugged his sense of national vexation, and enjoyed the privilege of having a grievance. There was a certain art in this, for it enabled him to say, and not to say—to hear with no other answer than a shrug, and when he chose not to hear at all, what to a person of conventional amenity of manner would have been embarrassing. He was always what Talleyrand from the first pronounced him to be, *un intrigant austère*. The First Minister, who hated personal grudges and national quarrels, understood the "puritanical pedantry of the man;" and where he felt safe in thinking aloud, laughed at his undress airs of philosophy. But he felt it was his business to make the best of a position

* To Lord Lansdowne, from Windsor Castle, August 18th, 1840.

of difficulty, if not of danger. He was ready to make every allowance for mortified self-esteem in the plenipotentiary, and for pique at being outwitted in the face of Europe in his astute master. He quite believed that the subtle King of the French could never rest until he had had his diplomatic revenge; and the event, though it came not in his time as minister, justified his foresight. The fortification of Paris was declared to be a matter of state necessity; but Louis Philippe was not the man to risk a general war on a mere point of national honour, and with sobs of theatrical anguish he accepted the resignation of M. Thiers. A rupture with France having been avoided, Melbourne spared no pains to allay the irritation caused by the late events.

No act of his long public life cost him, perhaps, more dear, from the use that was made of it as a theme of religious reproach, than his presentation, at levee, of Robert Owen to the Queen. When Home Secretary he had admitted this singular man to more than one interview to plead on behalf of the Dorchester labourers; and, struck by his calm and persistent enthusiasm, he listened curiously to certain portions of his schemes for popular regeneration. One of these was the protection by law of women and children from oppressive labour in factories. Owen had, in point of fact, originally suggested to Sir R. Peel (the elder) the advocacy in Parliament of a bill for that purpose; and for the remedial measure of 1833 he was fervent in gratitude and praise. His utopian and fantastic theories quickly passed, like dim phantoms, from the mind of the much occupied minister, who thought no more of the projector of New Lanark, until June 1839, when he received a letter asking permission to call at Downing Street. Owen's object was, he said, the presentation to her Majesty of a petition couched in unobjectionable terms and pleading generally for the need of educational and industrial measures to mitigate the prevalence of ignorance and pauperism. Many private letters proved the favourable consideration shown to his tentative efforts in the same direction, many years before, by several

dignitaries of the Church, by Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Ricardo, by several distinguished noblemen, and above all by the Duke of Kent, to whom he was personally well known. From various parts of the kingdom deputations had visited the Co-operative Settlement established by him near Glasgow, and reported generally in terms of high commendation of the experiment, one of the most striking novelties of which was the first example of an infant school. Mr. Edward Baines, known for his attachment to religious education, bore public testimony to what he and his fellow-citizens from Leeds witnessed there: "The establishment is conducted in a manner superior to any other the deputation ever witnessed, dispensing more happiness than perhaps any other institution in the kingdom where so many poor persons are employed, being founded on an admirable system of moral regulation. . . . In the education of the children the thing that is most remarkable, is the entire absence of everything that is likely to give them bad habits, with the presence of whatever is calculated to inspire them with good ones. The consequence is, that they appear like one well-regulated family, united together by ties of the closest affection;" no one being disparaged or disturbed on account of race, creed, opinions, or former ways of life. Owing to family differences among the principal capitalists in the concern, the industrial colony was after some years broken up; and, failing to re-establish another on a similar footing, Owen went to Germany and to America, seeking more willing proselytes in foreign statesmen and philanthropists. When these hopes vanished he returned to organise on a political and controversial footing his plan for revolutionising society; and, taking to him other spirits more wayward and less scrupulous than himself, he entered into schemes for the overthrow of ecclesiastical and aristocratic institutions; and the establishment instead of a commonwealth founded on secular instruction, disuse of arms, and an agrarian law. These changes were to be brought about, indeed, by argument alone, and the country would soon, it was

imagined, be converted by the agencies of a wide-spread propaganda.

Unaware in 1839 how far he had drifted from the modest and moderate tenets he professed in 1819, and with what different associates he had come to be combined, Melbourne without inquiry imprudently, as he afterwards confessed, told Owen that he had better attend the next levee and that, if necessary, he would himself present him to the Sovereign. On the 26th of June the regenerator of society, as his disciples called him, appeared at court, conforming duly to the indispensabilities of bag-wig and sword; and there on bended knee tendered for himself and fellows, infallible specifics for the evils of the modern world. The valuable prescription was graciously confided to the care of the courtier Secretary of State, who probably never read a word of it, and in five minutes after no one remembered that the prophet of universal demolition and reconstruction had passed through the palace in white silk stockings and buckled shoes. The morning papers duly chronicled the incident with scarce a word of comment. Not a well-bred watch-dog anywhere was heard to bark; only from afar off came a dismal cry of warning, but the unscared world of abuses and enormities went its old-fashioned way. In the course of the autumn, however, one of the irregulars of the crusade against existing institutions, skirmishing in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, challenged to mortal combat any who dared to meet him there, and for several days he was encountered by the Rev. Martin Foye, whose zeal was much applauded by the good folks of the town, and commended by his diocesan. A petition calling for legal proceedings against the further dissemination of socialist errors, and signed by four thousand magistrates, clergymen, and other persons of respectability, was forwarded to the Bishop of Exeter, by whom it was presented to the House of Lords.* He dwelt at length upon the subversive tendency of the doctrines which warred alike against Christian morals and established laws, and

* January 24th, 1840.

called the Home Secretary sharply to account for suffering the diffusion of publications tending to unhinge the popular mind. Owen's presentation at levee he excused with the sarcasm that the First Minister was probably unacquainted with the man, his works, or his proceedings; leaving it to be inferred that Melbourne had trifled with his responsibility by introducing an improper character to the Queen. The Duke of Wellington took up the matter in this sense, and was inclined to remonstrate against a supposed deviation from the rule which forbids any one to present to the Sovereign a person with whom he is not acquainted. Normanby deprecated the discussion as likely to do more harm than good; derided the Bishop's fears of revolution and atheism, and doubted whether he had not done more to bring the impugned projects into notice than their authors had been able to do. Melbourne said that he felt it necessary to notice the allusions made to him as the person who had last year performed the formal ceremony of presenting Mr. Owen at court in order to lay before her Majesty a petition from a very numerous body of persons. He must protest against the inference which had been drawn in that House and elsewhere, that because he had performed an act of formal duty he had become in any way responsible, or had involved himself in any degree with the opinions of that individual or with the persons whom he represented. He must wholly deny the justice of such an inference in the present case, or in that of any other person whom he might happen to present. He begged to say that he had in nowise lent his sanction to the sentiments of Mr. Owen, but he had not seen any ground for preventing the presentation of the petition with which Mr. Owen had been charged in the manner requested by the subscribers. The circumstances were, briefly, these: Mr. Owen had waited upon him to explain the general views for the regeneration of society embodied in the petition of his friends and followers, and which they respectfully desired permission to submit to her Majesty. He asked how this might properly be done, and

in reply he (Lord Melbourne) had told him that the course was to attend at levee; and when asked to present him, he somewhât imprudently, perhaps, consented to do so. Questions of attendance and presentation at court were not matters of opinion, but duty; and in the discharge of his duty he had not known anything in the character and opinions of Mr. Owen which should preclude him from that right which he enjoyed in common with other subjects of the Queen. The right reverend prelate had made it a matter of charge against the Government that they had not taken measures for the repression or suppression of opinions which he had said prevailed to a great extent, and which he ascribed to Mr. Owen. Unquestionably such opinions must be considered as in the highest degree pernicious. He did not regard them as free from danger because they were wild or absurd. It had been said justly that in the end truth would prevail, that that which was right would come forth triumphant; that that which was intrinsically wrong could not long exist he knew. The same sentiment had been eloquently expressed by the noble duke (Wellington) in the course of the previous year, when he declared that he had that regard for the force of truth, and so fully confided in it, that he believed it would always manifest itself in the end by its own strength and power. That was undoubtedly a great, a noble, and a magnanimous sentiment. And when they considered his great experience, and that he had been conversant with all ranks and conditions of men, the declaration became still more valuable. He wished for his own part he could participate fully and unreservedly in such feelings; but, with his experience of the world, he could not help shuddering at the power of falsehood. He knew the sway that had been exercised by falsehood at all times, and, although truth might be destined to vindicate itself in the end, he could not conceal from himself the fact that falsehood was strong, and would and did frequently prevail for a considerable period, particularly when assisted by active and ingenious advocates and organs, propagating it with

every species of malignity and perversion. It was, perhaps, a matter of grave apprehension that speculative opinions in politics and morals were widely diffused just then, and had long been so throughout the country, not merely on the subjects Mr. Owen had principally in view, but upon almost every question, religious or political; schemes the most wild, unfathomable, and dangerous; and many of which had not, like some of Mr. Owen's, the mitigating character of extreme absurdity. But what were they to do for correction of the mischief? The right reverend prelate had confidently said that the proceedings of the Socialists were illegal, being contrary to the Act which prohibited societies having affiliated branches. Perhaps so; but how many other societies were in the same condition? It ought to be well considered before a penal statute was put in force in one case, how far it would affect others. Hitherto that Act of Parliament had not been put in operation. If at any time it had had any effect it was that of deterring. Never had any penal or practical effect resulted from it. He doubted whether the statute would be effectual for the purposes demanded by the right reverend prelate in the present case. But it was said that the object of Mr. Owen and of the Socialists was to alter the whole form of the constitution of the country and to re-appropriate the whole of the property of the realm: and that therefore it was not legal. That might be the case; but that was not an illegality which could be criminally assigned in the present day, on account of the wide and vague scope of its application. For his own part he should like to know what there was established for the destroying of which there was not some society now in existence. Had they not a Voluntary Society, the avowed object of which was to do away altogether with a church establishment? and were there not many persons of respectability and character amongst the members of that society? Nevertheless he would not say that the objects of that society brought it within the penalties of the law. He much doubted, if even a general system of prosecution

were instituted against all societies holding speculative opinions as to property, laws, or religion, that such a system of prosecution could be easily carried out. He had no wish to dwell upon the extravagant opinions attributed to Mr. Owen. For himself he thought them as visionary and absurd as anything could possibly be, nor did he dislike the system less because it came clothed in the disguise of philanthropy. It did not appear to him to be less dangerous on that account, for it had been frequently remarked that those who professed and appeared to feel the deepest regard for their species, and the widest sentiments of humanity, often became in the course of events the most reckless and merciless. And it was an observation made by one of the leaders of the French revolution, that it was always that which appeared to be the most absurd that led to that which was the most sanguinary. He was unwilling to say a word to palliate or excuse doctrines or opinions the diffusion of which he deeply lamented, but the question for them to consider was, what was the prudent mode of dealing with them under the circumstances? They all knew that it had not been the practice of this or former Governments for many years past to institute prosecutions for the publication of speculative opinions—they had unquestionably allowed a political and philosophic press to exist unchecked and unrestrained. That had certainly been the practice for a considerable period, and he believed that a noble and learned friend of his, not then present,* could state from his experience as Solicitor and Attorney-General that such prosecutions in his time were found to be unavailing; and that they tended often not to repress, but to develop that which they were intended to put down. He could not at the same time help thinking that the experiment of permitting statements and expressions that might be considered of an absurd or dangerous character to go forth unnoticed and uncontradicted, was a doubtful one. This he had always looked upon as a most serious question; but he had never

* Lord Abinger.

seen any other mode of acting in such cases that carried with it anything like a probability of success, and he could not help entertaining great misgivings whether the adoption of a different course would be advisable, even in a case like that which had been brought under their notice.

During the autumn the Government lost by death its most popular, and in his peculiar way, its most influential member. Lord Holland, though in declining health, had, like his illustrious kinsman, continued to the last to take a lively interest in affairs, especially in all that concerned our relations with foreign States. Throughout the angry discussions which led to the Quadruple Treaty of July and the expulsion of Ibrahim Pasha from Syria, he had borne an active part, and led, in fact, the section who in the Cabinet had resisted the policy of Palmerston. For several months he was so infirm as to be wheeled in his chair into the House of Lords, and to be obliged to have permission to speak sitting. In August the strength of his constitution visibly failed, and dropsical tendencies were more and more discernible. His cheerfulness never forsook him, and to Melbourne, on the last occasion when he called to see him, he showed the epitaph which he had written for himself:—

> Here lies Henry Richard, Lord Vassal Holland, who in his sixty-seventh year was drowned sitting in his elbow chair.

On the 22nd of October he passed away, leaving vacant in political society a place which has not since been filled. To the Whig party his loss was indeed great; to its chief irreparable.

CHAPTER XII.

FALL OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

Debate on Eastern Question—Duties of Prince Albert—Removal of Plunket—Fixed duty on corn—Defeat on the sugar duties—Results of the general election—Resignation of Ministers.

Brougham, in concert with Aberdeen, lost no time in impugning the policy which had been pursued on the Eastern Question as likely to alienate France. Melbourne's defence was not merely that of a colleague, but of one primarily responsible. While he differed with Palmerston in private about the use of irritating phrases and supercilious airs, he promptly and cordially took his full share of accountability for acts done, not because they were irrevocable, but because he thought them righteous and wise. Whatever ill-humour might be transitorily stirred among our susceptible neighbours, England could not afford to see the outworks of the Porte dismantled or seized by any other Power whatsoever. With the system of Ottoman rule he felt in no way concerned. If the people of any province who thought themselves oppressed showed the pluck and persistency the Greeks had shown to fight their way out of the Moslem empire, neither he or Palmerston would raise a finger or utter a word to force them back into bondage. On the contrary, they would undoubtedly, as Cecil and Walsingham, Pym and Cromwell, Burke and Chatham, Canning and Huskisson, in like circumstances had done—recognise the independence of the new-born child of freedom. But it

must first strive and cry into the world of international existence before it could be called by a name of its own, or be entitled to the privileges and benefits of nationhood. From this clear rule, whatever might betide, they, who had held office when the Treaty of London was signed acknowledging the independence of Greece, would not depart; but neither would they stand by and see an old ally hewn down by rebel chiefs incited to sedition by a covetous rival. Tame neutrality on the part of England would be at variance with her interest and her honour. Shorn of his strength, the Moslem could no longer hold Stamboul; and we should then be compelled for our own sakes to incur the cost and burthen of keeping all others out of it. What English minister of sober judgment would precipitate such a contingency or shrink from the plain obligation to avert it if he could? Melbourne knew that these were the opinions of the Duke of Wellington on the Eastern Question; but he could not tell beforehand whether they would be enunciated in debate at this particular juncture.

Rising immediately after Brougham had concluded his diatribe against the foreign policy which had circumscribed the ambition of Mehemet Ali at the sacrifice, as he said, of our alliance with France, and thus working out blindly the designs of Russia by the severance of the two great Western Powers, Melbourne boldly took his stand on what had been accomplished by the Quadruple Treaty of July, and calmly but firmly asserted the prudence and patriotism of the ministerial policy. "He could not admit the justice of the strictures of the noble and learned lord. He believed it could be shown that a cause had existed if not of absolute necessity, yet of stringent policy, imperatively calling on the Government to act as they had done for the purpose of preserving the peace of Europe. There was not the slightest ground for the charge of discourtesy towards France. He was asked what was the great object they had had in view? His answer was, the preservation of peace by the settlement of the affairs of the Levant, and by preserving the integrity

of the Turkish Empire as much as possible in the state in which it was. It was evident from papers on the table that it was the intention of the Pasha of Egypt to establish his own independence, and to found a new Mahomedan state on the shores of the Mediterranean, and by further encroachments to make himself the greatest Mahomedan power in that part of the world. It was the policy of the other Powers to prevent the execution of such a design. The only charge which could be justly made against them was that of too long delaying to act. This was owing to their earnest desire to act in concert with France. They had been disappointed in this respect; but he still indulged the hope that an agreement of opinion would yet be come to between them. He trusted that ere long they should see all the Great Powers united to secure the peace of the world. But it was not in the power of any one nation to command peace, and it was certainly not the surest way to avoid war to declare beforehand that under no circumstances would we resort to that alternative."

The Duke of Wellington expressed his concurrence in the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne, which he hoped would be unanimously agreed to. "He was one of those who approved of the policy of the measures which had been taken by Ministers. The state of things in the Levant had for years excited his anxious attention. He was happy to say that he had reason to think that the dangers which menaced the peace of Europe would be averted, and that France would join the other Powers in maintaining the peace of the world. He knew of no other alliance with France than that of a good understanding in general. They had often acted in concert; sometimes apart. At the negotiations of Verona, where he had been ambassador, France had acted separately from England, yet we did not then take offence. He could not discover in the late proceedings any just cause of quarrel on the part of France. The only fault that he could find was that the negotiations had been carried on orally rather than by notes, according to the usual

course. He knew no peculiar advantages obtained by Russia in agreeing to what had been done for the settlement of the affairs of the Levant, as Lord Brougham had supposed. There was no man living who had done half so much for the preservation of peace and for maintaining the honour of France and promoting her true interests as he had done from 1814 to the last moment he remained in office; he had done everything in his power to preserve the peace of Europe, and to keep up a good understanding between France and England, from the firm conviction that if France were not placed in the situation she ought to hold in the councils of Europe there was no security for the public peace, or a sound decision on any subject of general policy."

When the Queen next day told Melbourne that if the Duke of Coburg could not stand sponsor at the christening of the Princess Royal, she wished the great soldier to represent him, he expressed great satisfaction, and said, "indeed, the Duke is the best friend we have."* Speaking to her Majesty afterwards of the ceremony, he said, laughing, "How her little highness looked round, as if quite conscious that the stir was all about herself."

His freedom and jocosity of manner often disarmed the wariest and wiliest of those with whom he had to do. A journalist who was devoted to the interests of the Government, and who frequently obtained for them, through agencies in the City, early information of importance, plumed himself on never telling all he knew, or allowing men in office to draw from him more than he intended. He called one morning early at South Street, and was shown into the dressing-room, where my lord was loitering at his toilet, half reading letters, and glancing occasionally at the foreign newspapers, just arrived. His visitor mentioned the contents of a communication he had had from Paris, which gave warning of a political intrigue at the moment on foot in England, in which two persons of consequence

* The Queen's Journal. Martin's 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i. p. 100.

were engaged, but one of whom only he named. Melbourne entered frankly into the whole affair, abstaining carefully from asking who was the second sapper and miner at work against him. When the subject was sufficiently discussed, his informant rose and withdrew. Melbourne accompanied him to the top of the staircase, and as he went down leaned over the balustrade, seemingly engaged with filliping a towel which he held in his hand, and talking casually about other things; then, as he turned to say good-bye, he said negligently that he thought he would checkmate both, at least he would try, naming at a shrewd guess the second adversary whom he wanted to know. His informant did not repudiate his surmise, and only bethought him when halfway into the City that by acquiescence he had betrayed the secret which he meant to keep.

It was the minister's desire from the outset that Prince Albert should become thoroughly acquainted with the general principles of the public administration, and with the working of each department as far as he could be expected to devote time to its details, in order that he might usefully bear the part he had assigned to himself of aiding his royal consort in the discharge of her exalted duties; and the highest of all testimony is borne to Melbourne's anxiety "that the Queen should tell him and show him everything connected with public affairs."* The result was, as the Prince himself observed, when writing to his father, that he "studied the politics of the day with great industry, speaking quite openly to the ministers on all subjects, so as to gain information, and endeavouring quietly to be of as much use to the Queen in her position as possible."†

Before the end of the financial year, which then terminated on the 5th of April, it became evident that the continued decline in the revenue would leave a deficit to be provided for of not less than £2,000,000; and this it was

* 'Early Years of Queen Victoria,' p. 319.

† Letter to the Duke of Coburg, April 1841.

clear, from the depressed condition of trade, rendered vigorous and comprehensive changes in fiscal legislation indispensable. It was resolved to revert to Lord Althorp's proposals of ten years before greatly to reduce the import duties on timber and sugar, by which he calculated upon a gain of £1,300,000, and by the issue of exchequer bills the Finance Minister hoped to balance the estimated expenditure of the current year. But to give the relief to labour and the impulse to enterprise requisite to make so great an experiment with any reasonable chance of success, Mr. Baring recommended the abandonment of the sliding scale of imposts on foreign corn, and the substitution of a fixed duty of eight shillings a quarter. The Premier hesitated for some time to accede to a proposal in which his sagacity discerned the elements of party dissolution without the compensating advantage of a permanent settlement. The popular cry, not as yet loud, indeed, but already hoarse and deep, was for cheap bread and more employment, not for a uniform price of the quartern loaf, or a subsidiary tax that might be relied on to eke out a deficient revenue. All the statistics in the world could not persuade him that a majority of the owners and occupiers of land, and of the merchants and traders in towns, would return a majority to Parliament pledged to what was called at the time "this bundle of mixed goods for Protection to jump out of the window upon." If public credit could not be sustained and the public service kept up by the old ways of taxation, "the corn laws of course must go, and with them whoever proposed their abandonment." For the change would amount to an industrial if not to a political revolution, and could not be regulated or guided by a half-measure like this. The result abundantly verified these shrewd prognostics; but no statesman of eminence was yet prepared to advocate absolute free trade in food; and Lansdowne, Russell, Palmerston, and the rest of their colleagues believed that they were proposing as large a measure of concession in sugar and corn as public opinion would sanction. Their chief doubtingly and despondingly gave way

to their reasonings. Lord John gave notice that he would move on the 7th of May to abolish the sliding scale of 1828, and to enact instead fixed duties of 8*s.* on wheat, 5*s.* on rye, 4*s.* 6*d.* on barley, and 3*s.* 4*d.* on oats; and as the sugar duties would expire unless renewed or modified, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the meanwhile was obliged to move resolutions embodying his contemplated reductions on that important necessary of life. A debate which lasted eight nights developed all the combined resources of the agricultural and colonial interests, which made instinctively common cause in defence of the principles of protection; and, under the leadership of Sir Robert Peel, in a House of 598 members, defeated the Government by a majority of thirty-six.

The Cabinet met to consider what was to be done. Melbourne, Lansdowne, and Labouchere were for resigning at once. The majority were in favour of an appeal to the country. Macaulay argued ingeniously that constitutional precedent justified a dissolution of a Parliament which had existed four years, and which had adopted most of the important measures introduced by Ministers; Lord John thought so too; and being outvoted on the question, Melbourne communicated the result of their deliberations to the Queen, and said: "Of course I felt I could but go with them; so we shall go on, bring in the old sugar duties, and then, if things are in a pretty good state, dissolve." *

The rest of the session was consumed in angry but desultory discussions on the various aspects of the new financial policy which had been inaugurated, speeches being made on both sides rather with a view to the hustings than with any hope of convincing or converting an expiring Parliament. Several changes of minor importance were made in the Administration; one only requires to be noticed, particularly from the hitherto unexplained origin of the transaction and the part which Melbourne himself bore in it.

* Martin's 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i. p. 107.

Lord Campbell describes the dejection caused by the supposed loss of office in 1839, and the revulsion of feeling when it was known that Sir Robert Peel had declined to form a ministry. He had submitted to be passed over when Bickersteth was made Master of the Rolls and Pepys was made Chancellor, in the hope that the chief place in one of the common law courts would be his reward. After an escape so narrow of losing his chance of promotion, he naturally urged his claims to consideration on the restored Ministers, and especially on the Chancellor. A Council was appointed to be held at Windsor on the 30th of September. On his way thither, Lord Cottenham spoke strongly on the subject to Lord J. Russell, urging the reasonableness of room being made in Ireland, where the Attorney-General might be appointed Chancellor. Plunket had held the office for nine years, and though still well able to perform his jucidial functions, he might possibly be induced without difficulty to retire. The leader of the Commons agreed to confer with the Premier, and some conversation took place in consequence between them. Melbourne was rather acquiescent than suggestive in the matter, but at the instance of the Chancellor he wrote confidentially to the Lord Lieutenant:

> We hear that Plunket would not be unwilling to retire, but nothing from himself or which can be implicitly relied on. I should be very unwilling to propose to him anything which could hurt his feelings or be inconsistent with his own objects or wishes. But it would be convenient to us if we could now get the Irish Seal for the Attorney-General. Do you know anything of Plunket's wishes, or do you know any means of sounding him without giving him uneasiness?

Lord Ebrington inclosed a transcript of this inquiry in a letter from himself on the 15th of October, begging the Irish Chancellor "frankly and fairly to tell him what he felt on the subject." The venerable judge replied that, although "at his time of life the wish to retire would be a

very natural one, he had never expressed such a wish to any person, nor at the present juncture should he have thought it becoming to withdraw himself from the discharge of public duty, either in Ireland or in Parliament. At the same time, it was quite clear that, after the communication of Lord Melbourne's wishes, he could not continue in office, but it was merely for that reason that he came to such a decision." He concluded with the assurance of his continued support of the Government out of office, and his undiminished sense of obligation for the favours conferred upon his family as well as the kindness shown to himself.

Melbourne was touched by the feeling and dignity of this reply, and wrote at once from Windsor:

> It is impossible for me to express the deep concern I feel that this subject has ever been mentioned to you. Lord Ebrington wrote, as I doubt not that you are persuaded, with the best and kindest intentions towards both you and me, but all that I had asked him was, whether he had any reason to believe that the reports which reached me that you were desirous of retiring had any foundation. I can only assure you that I greatly rejoice that they are groundless; that I most highly estimate the truly manly, honourable, and patriotic motives by which you are actuated; that I should have considered your retirement at the present moment highly disadvantageous, both in point of character and strength, to the Government; and for all these reasons I must earnestly entreat you to think of what has passed no more than if it never had taken place.*

November term drew nigh, and the hale old man resumed his seat in the Court of Chancery, hearing arguments with the same impartial and discriminative care, and delivering judgments with the same lucidity as formerly: and when the day's work was done he might be seen walking home as

* 'Life of Plunket,' vol. ii., pp. 330, 332.

usual with step quick and firm. No falling off was perceptible in his powers of body or of mind. He continued to command the confidence of suitors and the homage of the bar, who, without respect of parties, recognised in him the most illustrious member of the profession. Rumours nevertheless crept into the public journals some time afterwards of his removal to make room for Sir J. Campbell. It was certain that they did not proceed either from him or from the head of the Government, neither having any interest in their circulation, after what had passed. It was not so clear that others had as little motive for keeping alive the notion and familiarising the public mind with the suggested change. Still people were incredulous, and beyond a scornful contradiction in the Irish press during the year 1840, scarce any attention seemed to be drawn to the matter. Great was the amazement, therefore, when on the eve of the general election of 1841 the announcement was made by the Chancellor's Secretary, in the Hall of the Courts in Dublin, that Plunket had been called on to resign in order to make way for the English Attorney-General.

Remarkable as had been the vicissitudes of Plunket's career, no one could have anticipated the event by which it was destined to be closed. The general election was at hand, and if the Ministry were beaten they were pledged to resign. Full of years and honours, the Irish Chancellor could hardly reckon upon a renewal of his office; and had a reconstruction of the Government required his retirement with other veteran colleagues, he was not likely to demur. Meanwhile he used more than ordinary diligence to finish his list of causes, and in the course of Trinity Term had devoted himself successfully to clearing off arrears. Before his task was completed, he received a letter from the Viceroy reminding him of certain expressions on a former occasion that he would be content to vacate his office whenever it might be deemed essential for the Government to have it at their disposal, and intimating that the time had now arrived. Mortified at the too summary exaction of a promise which

he had certainly offered as a waiver of personal interests for those of party, and not for the sake of merely gratifying the ambition of one whose claims he deemed far inferior to his own, he disdained to parley on the subject, and in a few significant words announced his removal to the bar. Public surprise and anger were increased when the immediate object of the change transpired. The English Attorney-General claimed, as the reward of his long services, a peerage and a seat on the judicial bench; and as none of the chief judges in the Courts of Westminster would resign, it was thought room might be made for him at Dublin. The authorship of the suggestion was confidently assigned to the Premier, who, it was said, felt himself under obligations to Sir John Campbell which otherwise he could not discharge. The truth is, as already stated, it was Lord Cottenham who first broached the idea, not that Lord Plunket might be dismissed, but that he might possibly be persuaded to resign. He could not feign content in order that a stranger to the country and to the practice of equity should for a few weeks occupy his seat. His blunt disclosure of the way in which he had been treated might be deemed inconsiderate, but no consideration, he said, had been shown to him or to the profession of whose rights he had so long been the highest guardian. The nomination of Sir J. Campbell as a Keeper of the Irish Seal was denounced by the press as a job, and by the profession as a wrong. The step, once publicly taken, could not be retraced, and Melbourne was not the man to throw the blame on others which by acquiescence he might be fairly held to share. But in reality neither the inception of the scheme or its accomplishment belonged to him.

In the last week of July the Queen and Prince were entertained by Lord and Lady Cowper at Panshanger, whence they proceeded on the morning of the 30th through Hertford and Welwyn to visit the Premier at Brocket. Numerous arches decked with laurel boughs, and gay with flowers, spanned the way; crowds of all classes in holiday garb

coming forth to offer cordial greeting. The Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Palmerston, and Lady Lyttelton accompanied her Majesty in an open carriage, while his Royal Highness, attended by Lords de Grey, Palmerston, Cowper, and Charles Russell, were on horseback. The Queen seemed much struck with the beauty of the park and of the windings of the Lee through its noble glades. Under the great oaks and beeches near the house groups of young and old were gathered awaiting the youthful Sovereign, who they knew had their best friend for her chief Minister, but whom few of them had ever seen before. In front of the mansion he awaited the approach of the Queen, and upon her arrival conducted her Majesty through the principal rooms, and, after tendering a graceful welcome, had the honour of entertaining the royal party at luncheon. An hour was subsequently passed in noticing the pictures, several of which were interesting to her Majesty as recalling the memory of those with whom Melbourne had spent his early days. He had then the gratification of conducting her through a portion of the grounds, where the delight of the people broke forth in a gladness so loyal and affectionate that more than once he was visibly affected. He knew the end of his official career was nigh at hand; but it had been long, and this was a delicious sunset.

At the general election, two Conservatives were returned for the City, and though Lord J. Russell kept his seat, he was lowest on the poll. Lord Howick was beaten in Northumberland, Lords Melton and Morpeth in the West Riding, and Macaulay at Edinburgh. In Ireland the tide of opinion seemed to have likewise turned. O'Connell was rejected for the first time in Dublin, owing in no slight measure to the belief among certain classes that he had sanctioned the supercession of Plunket to make way for Sir J. Campbell. Most of the other Liberals of distinction in the three kingdoms were indeed re-elected, but the rank and file that so long had followed them were greatly thinned; and when the new Parliament met, it was obvious that a

large majority in both Houses was prepared to vote want of confidence in the Administration.

Although the Queen was advised to recommend in the Speech from the Throne the consideration by the new Parliament "whether the laws regulating the trade in corn did not aggravate the natural fluctuations of supply, and by their operation diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community," everybody knew that this advice would not be followed by the majority in either House.

The issue of the party struggle was indeed no longer doubtful, but it was resolved to uphold the great principle contended for to the last. Lord Spencer, for the first time in the space of seven years, left his retirement to identify himself with his friends at the eve of their approaching fall. In moving the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, he not only indorsed the Free Trade Budget without reserve, but encountered with characteristic courage and directness the taunt of undiminishment of deficit, and consequently of undischarged debt, which, more than any other consideration, had outweighed in the public mind the inducements of cheaper timber, sugar, and corn. "It was true that the debt had somewhat increased, but wealth had increased in greater proportion. To augment this still further was the aim of the Government, who proposed not to increase, but revise taxation, by lowering restrictive duties and giving a freer course to the extension of commerce. The main peculiarity in existing circumstances was the pressure of taxation, and the most effectual way of meeting that pressure was to develop the national wealth, leaving the burthen of the debt to fall more lightly on the extended resources of the country."

With the exception of Brougham, who revelled in the contemplation of the fall of him who had so long kept him out of power, no influential peer took the trouble to discuss at any length the amendment to the Address. Melbourne's own indolence seemed to have already resumed its sway over

him; he felt the end was come, that nothing he could say could possibly retard it for an hour, and that the expression of complaint or regret would only invite ridicule. He had held his great place longer than any man of his time; he had carried measures which he believed would be regarded as corner-stones in the modernised home of English freedom; he had taken off several oppressive and injurious taxes, and he quitted office without a hint being even murmured that he had appropriated to himself the smallest favour of the Crown. If these things were forgotten by the country, the country was not worth serving; if they were remembered, words from him were not wanting. Had he been an orator, the occasion would, no doubt, have tempted him to epitomise with pardonable pride the events of his seven years' pilotage of the ship of state; but nature had not cast him in that mould, and the rhetoric art was not among his many gifts. Speaking in the Commons, even when a young man, had been to him troublesome, and in the Peers, even at the height of his power, had always been an effort he would gladly have avoided. Why should he be at the pains to make the exertion now? and yet because he would not be at the pains to get up a display of fireworks for his own official obsequies, he has been scoffed at by the man of all others whom he gratified and served, not wisely, but too well.* The vote which closed his ministerial career was carried by a majority of seventy-two in the Upper House, and at five in the morning of the 28th of August, the House of Commons decided by a majority of ninety-one in favour of Mr. Wortley's motion. By the Queen's desire, Melbourne repaired to Windsor on the same evening, and resigned his trust. "He praised the speeches of Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel," † he betrayed no appearance of depression or chagrin, and spoke only of the coming change with some degree of anxiety as it might occasion trouble and uneasiness to her Majesty. "For four years," he said, "I have seen you every day; but

* Campbell; 'Lives of Lyndhurst and Brougham,' p. 518.

† Queen's Journal.

it is so different now to what it would have been in 1839: the Prince understands everything so well."* Next morning, when he took leave, the Queen was much affected. Writing soon afterwards to King Leopold, Her Majesty said:

I cannot resist copying for you what Lord Melbourne wrote to me the evening after we parted. He had already praised Albert greatly to me before he took leave of me. "Lord Melbourne cannot satisfy himself without again stating to your Majesty in writing what he had the honour of saying to your Majesty respecting his Royal Highness the Prince. Lord Melbourne has formed the highest opinion of his Royal Highness's judgment, temper, and discretion, and he cannot but feel a great consolation and security in the reflection that he leaves your Majesty in a situation in which your Majesty has the inestimable advantage of such advice and assistance. Lord Melbourne feels certain that your Majesty cannot do better than have recourse to it whenever it is needed, and rely upon it with confidence." This naturally gave me great pleasure, and made me very proud, as it comes from a person who is no flatterer, and would not have said it, if he did not think so or feel so.†

In contemplation of the change of Administration which at length seemed inevitable, Prince Albert had conferred with Melbourne in May on the expediency of coming beforehand to some understanding with respect to reconstituting the female portion of the Household, so as to avoid all semblance of cause for complaint on the part of the new Government, while maintaining the consistency of the Queen's declaration in 1839 that the exclusion of female friends of her youth formed no part of the duty or right of the incoming Ministry. Melbourne thought it would suffice if the near relatives of members of the Cabinet should retire,

* Queen's Journal, p. 117.

† Idem.

and that the other ladies of the bedchamber should remain; and he undertook that there would be no difficulty about the former portion of the arrangement if the latter was acquiesced in. Mr. Anson was accordingly instructed to communicate with Sir Robert Peel, who at once gave his assent; and before the transfer of power actually took place, the Duchess of Sutherland tendered her resignation as Mistress of the Robes, and the Duchess of Bedford and the Marchioness of Normanby theirs as Ladies-in-Waiting. The Countess of Charlemont and Lady Portman retained their positions in the household.

The new arrangements being complete, the outgoing Ministers attended at Claremont and resigned their seals of office; Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues were then admitted to kiss hands.

On taking his seat upon the woolsack for the fourth time, Lyndhurst unexpectedly betrayed some embarrassment. In seven years' vacation he had not grown younger, and never having been by study versed in precedents or forms, he had in the interval forgotten much. In the heyday of his prime he got up the judicial ritual with marvellous quickness, and with histrionic ease and grace performed his part to perfection. But ever indolent, and from long habit idle, he forgot that technicalities are apt to slip from the memory without one knowing it; and when at sixty-nine he had to robe and act again, though summoned, they would not come. To his own surprise, no doubt, as much as to that of others, he faltered, used the wrong words occasionally, mended the error, and then he looked chagrined. Who would think, said Melbourne, observing him, that this is the same impudent dog who bullied us so unconscionably in his "Reviews of the Session"? There was, however, but little to be done in that brief September interval; and by the time Parliament met for business in the spring, the Chancellor was once more perfect in his imposing part.*

* Campbell; 'Life of Lyndhurst,' p. 132.

After his resignation, Melbourne spent some weeks in Derbyshire. Several addresses from influential persons acknowledged the many useful measures carried by his administration. The self-elected corporations of nearly every town in the kingdom had been replaced by councils chosen by a broad constituency of ratepayers; a legal provision for the poor established in Ireland; the criminal code amended; and cheap postage for the first time attained. The address from Derby was presented by Dr. Forrester, that from Melbourne by Mr. Haines.

Both to you who have done me the great honour to come hither from the enlightened and opulent town of Derby, and to you who are my immediate neighbours and friends in this place and its vicinity, I am anxious to express the deep sense of satisfaction with which I receive this testimony of your confidence and approbation. It is very natural that you should revert to, and I have great gratification in remembering, the autumn of the year 1834, when I had the honour of receiving you, in this very place, upon a similar occasion. Some of those who now stand before me were then present; and they will probably recollect that I took the liberty of impressing upon them the necessity of union and concord, and of warning them that, considering the natural strength and compact array of our adversaries, there was no hope of success except in combined and unanimous exertion (loud cries of "Hear, hear!"). Those sentiments were, as I flattered myself, received at the time with concurrence and approbation. They were more than approved. They were adopted and acted upon, and the usual consequence of success ensued (cheers). Since that time, in other parts of the country, discords and differences of opinion have arisen, which have also been followed by their natural and necessary consequences—defeat and failure. It gives me, therefore, great satisfaction to find that in your address you repeat and confirm that opinion, by stating

that "in a free and enlightened nation the firm and united voice of the people, when constitutionally directed to just and legitimate objects, cannot long be resisted." You are right, gentlemen. Union alone is irresistible, and union can only be insured by the choice of defined objects; not doubtful, speculative, and hazardous, but dictated by reason, approved by experience, and of a practicable character. I have the more pleasure in referring to that former period, because I have to render you the justice of declaring that you have acted entirely up to the principles which you then professed. Whether we have done our duty or not, you have done yours. In the exercise of your rights and franchises you gave to the late Government which you trusted, a steady, firm, unvarying support, and I cannot refrain from observing, that if the same consistent line of conduct had been pursued by other constituencies, the result of the late political contest would have been different from that which has taken place Both the addresses contain expressions of kindly feeling towards myself personally, by which I am sensibly touched. More than seven years have now elapsed since that month of November, 1834, to which I have already so often recurred, and the progress of time has brought upon me, what it must bring upon all, impaired strength, less buoyant spirits, and diminished powers of exertion. The consciousness of this decline naturally renders me less ambitious of undertaking a post of so much labour, such heavy responsibility, and such unceasing anxiety, as that which I have lately held; but the deep debt of gratitude which I owe to my Sovereign and my country will not permit me to withdraw myself from their service, nor to refuse any task which may appear likely to conduce to their interest and welfare. The great questions relating to the commerce and revenue of the country, which were in appearance the causes of the dissolution of the late ministry, remain yet to be determined. The financial difficulties of the state have not been the work of this or

of that administration; they have been foreseen, or rather they have existed ever since, and indeed long before, the termination of the great war with France in 1815, and they are the consequence of a long series of events, into which it is vain to inquire, except as a question for the future, whether they could have been avoided or prevented. The state of trade, foreign and domestic, and the severe distress which prevails in many of the manufacturing districts, although I should lament that either should be exaggerated for political purposes, and employed as a ground and reason for political change, still imperiously demand the most serious and immediate attention of the Government and the Legislature. It was our opinion that the measures which we proposed, and which you have enumerated, were calculated at once to supply the pecuniary deficiency and to relieve the commercial embarrassment. We proposed them in good faith and with the hope that the greater portion of them would have received the sanction of Parliament. They were summarily opposed. A distinct declaration of want of confidence in the administration was carried in the House of Commons. We advised an appeal to the people, which was made, and it has been decided against us. It will now be for her Majesty's present advisers to bring forward upon their part such plans as they may think better suited to the circumstances of the times. And it will be for your representatives to consider those plans with reference to, and in comparison with, the measures which we submitted to the last Parliament; I can only say that for myself they shall receive a full and fair consideration, and that as far as in me lies, we will do to others that justice which I hold to have been denied to me and my colleagues, and in being denied to us, to have also been denied to the country.

An admirable sketch by H. B., lifelike and characteristic, with an air of most delicate ridicule about it, suggested a

soliloquy of the ousted minister. He was portrayed in a careless attitude, ruminating aloud on the late eviction from the Palace of the young intruder whose dexterous curiosity made his name for a time a household word. "That boy Jones must be a very clever fellow! To make his way into the palace once, or twice was not so extraordinary; I have done as much as that myself: but how he managed to get in the third time; I wish I knew his secret."* Well might Croker say, when commenting on the tardily accomplished change of parties, "The *Times* and H. B. have done it all."

Being wholly without gall, jealousy, or rancour, Melbourne forgave easily injury repented of, and condoned all kinds of offence, where he was himself only concerned, without effort on his own part or humiliation on that of others. A pending dispute was, in fact, to him a bore; and it was a positive relief to be rid of it. He cared nothing about having the best of an argument, and very little that people said the next day he had had the superiority. A great deal better not to have had it, he thought, if wounded self-importance chafed at defeat; or conviction of error turned a useful or pleasant acquaintance into a muffled enemy. Yet he had not in him a spice of calculating or sinister dissimulation. He could put on upon occasion a fitting garb of courtesy and deference. But neither in the Senate or at Court could he attune his voice to flattery; even with women it was not his way. In friendship or in love none could be more tender, ardent, or caressing; he did not try to hide the tears that sympathy with grief or misery drew from him; and for beauty, wit, gracefulness, and by all that enters into the magic of fascination he was ready to be led captive and to own it. No heat of quarrel, no promulgation of estrangement, no reciprocity of reproaches made him forget the qualities by which he had been once spell-bound. With his wife, the most provoking of un-helpmates, he made it up more than once when she asked him after open separa-

* H. B., No 705; October 1841.

tion to love her once again; and despite the stare and jeer it might occasion, he seldom spoke of her without implying, directly or indirectly, that to the last she had more ascendency over him than any other human being.

Between colleagues who got wrong with each other he was uniformly a peacemaker, and he was rather proud of constructing bridges, sometimes rickety enough and built of the oddest materials, by which the rift in friendship might be overpassed. He had his own troubles in this respect where Foreign Affairs were concerned; for Palmerston, elated with a continuance of success, was often overbearing in council, and to the representatives of foreign powers supercilious and haughty. All complaints, whether of supposed neglect or insolence, came to him, and he was ever prompt to soothe the irritability of diplomatic self-esteem, and to engage that the matter should be explained. Sometimes it proved to be inexplicable. In the main Palmerston was generally in the right, and all that could be done was to get him to say or write something civil, or where that was unattainable, to write and say the civil things without asking his assent beforehand. In 1840 the Cabinet nearly broke up upon the Syrian Question, and with a different kind of man for Premier it is probable that either Palmerston or Holland would have quitted the Government before the Quadruple Treaty was signed. The Foreign Secretary's sagacity and determination triumphed without any breach, political or personal, and when the peril was over the generosity and good-humour of Holland rejoiced candidly at the result.

It has been said that an attitude more dignified, if not dictatorial, would have been more befitting a First Minister. Whether the bearing and demeanour which characterised Walpole, Pitt, Grenville, or Peel is really of advantage to the public service may be questioned. What is the great praise, after all, of being dogmatic and domineering in secondary affairs, if in the weightier matters of the law, whereby the national fate is principally determined, the

imperious will is found liable to give way? Be this, however, as it may, we know that in the main constitutional progress has been made by conference and mutual suasion, and what the ignorance of fools is ready to call compromise, but what is really the fine and subtle harmony wrought by consummate skill out of seeming discord; compared with which the iteration of a dominant note, however clear, or the voice of a trumpet, however loud, is not so very admirable or commendable. But for Melbourne to have assumed any other position than that of *primus inter pares* would have been ridiculous and in truth impossible. Earl Grey, with more pretension and prestige, seldom ventured to avow how much wiser and better than his colleagues he believed himself to be; and when at last, in a fit of ill-temper, he resigned because he could not impose his opinion on a divided Cabinet, he was, to his great astonishment, allowed to drop out of the Government, every one else remaining in; and he had the mortification of seeing his neglected prophecies of evil remain unfulfilled. Melbourne had, without theorising on the subject, formed the conviction that the administration to be constitutional, respected, and strong, must be representative. He studied with care the conflicting interests and influences of chief note and weight in the community; and as far as prejudices and jealousies and difficulties of all kinds would permit, he endeavoured that all should have a voice, more or less audible, in the Government. Having done so, he neither expected or desired unanimity in council. That would have been to him cause for suspicion and uneasiness; he liked discussion as much as he abhorred dispute; and each of his colleagues knew that he was always accessible to frank and free expostulation, argument, and advice.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLOSING YEARS.

Disenchantment and depression—Ill-health—Anti-Corn Law League —Renewed agitation in Ireland—Disintegration of Peelism—Friends in power without him—Illness and death.

On the first day of the session of 1842 Brougham took his seat on the front bench next to Melbourne, just as he had done seven years before, chatting and conferring with his former friends all round whether they would or not. From that position he spoke of the notorious bribery of the last general election, apportioning the blame without fear, favour, or affection, to the supporters of the party now in power, "over and against whom he had the honour to stand, and the party in Opposition in the front rank of which he had the honour to take his place." (Hear, hear, and a laugh from Lord Melbourne). "He was at a loss to know what was meant by the interruption. Was his noble friend lately at the head of the Government annoyed at the term Opposition?" Melbourne retorted by reminding his implacable friend that so transcendent and impartial an arbiter of all legislative measures ought not to declare himself beforehand a leader of Opposition. In the good old times men were not ranged in accordance with plighted vows of party. He could recollect when a member of the other House, a gentleman being called to order for designating some one as a member of the Opposition, and the Speaker ruling that the epithet was irregular.

During the Session he spoke frequently; criticising the details of the Income Tax Bill, and that for the reconstruction of the sliding scale of duties on corn; urging the necessity of an amendment of the Marriage Law in Ireland, and of inquiry into the employment of women and children in collieries and mines. He attended regularly the sittings of the Upper House, and to casual observers did not seem wanting in the performance of the various duties of leadership. But from himself he could not conceal the loss of significance in all he said,—the comparative unimportance of what he did or what he thought.

Life from this time was no longer enjoyable as it once had been. Not that the means of enjoyment failed, or that the zest for pleasure flagged. In company he was still excitable and the cause of excitement in others; he fell in with the humour of those around him if cultivated and congenial, not easily or unresistingly, but rather as acid and alkali mixed by the affinity that sparkles and bubbles over in genial effervescence. His reply to Lady Holland, when she undertook to explain some passing puzzle of the day, or to lay down the unwritten law of taste or right upon some new question, was "No, no, I don't think so at all:" and they would fence and spar and give one another kind knocks, but all in the assured freedom and frankness of mutual confidence that nothing on either side could wound or mar. Listeners to the brisk and not unfrequently brusque argument often feared it would come to altercation, and so in fact, or form at least, it sometimes did. Her vehemence would now and then get off the regular track, and for awhile seem to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of exaggeration; but in a moment after their colloquy was ambling along as pleasantly as before, in badinage without bridle. Hours thus spent were still sunny and warm; but the warmth had not the once lasting glow. In her pungent and often provokingly petulant or insufferably insolent talk, he found amusement to the last. They fought over books and dishes, foreign envoys whom every one had forgotten but themselves, and court foibles of a day

gone by that had escaped the gleaners of scandal. She was one of the few people whom he would ever allow to speak to him of her who had been, as he said, the most exquisite charm and keenest trial of his life: and understanding him thoroughly, Lady Holland was careful never to ruffle the placid surface of remembrance by thoughtless word or tone. Lord Holland's name, encircled with associations all of them bright, noble, and tender, continually recurred; and was a theme of endless resuscitation and revival of pleasant memories. The void he had left politically and personally could never be supplied, and the gap in the social circle never could be filled. Nobody, indeed, was ever suspected of aspiring to take his place: colleague and wife would have equally hated him who attempted to do so.

But the collapse, when long sustained excitement abruptly ended, no new pursuit or passion takes its place,—let no man talk of what it is or what its consequences, mental or material are, who has not experienced it. The professional or commercial slave to gainful drudgery says he is glad to escape from the daily round of toil grown irksome because he has sold the goodwill of his business, or got an appointment for life, or come into the enjoyment of landed estate by inheritance. Such a man has only exchanged one form of solicitude for another, and generally speaking a comparatively subordinate for a higher species of anxiety, less physical labour for novel burthens of dignity. There is nothing in common between this every-day change of condition upwards or onwards, and the fall of a sensitive and excitable statesman. If young and dissipated like Fox, he may console himself with gaming, flirtation, and demagogueism. If phlegmatic and still in the prime of life, like Peel, he may find occupation in agricultural experiments, and the gradual reconstruction of a party in opposition, preparatory to the recovery of power with firmer authority than before. If he be a man of letters and an orator like Thiers, he may vary the excitement of historic composition with that of harangues on great occasions,

making his supplanters quail and all Christendom hearken. But where such alternatives are wanting the loss of power held long enough to have become habitual is a sentence of privation that a proud man will not complain of, but that a susceptible man can no more help feeling acutely than he can be indifferent to the pain of unsatisfied hunger day after day. It took three years of supercilious sulk to debilitate the faculties and nerves of Pitt; so that when he humbled himself to regain office, a few months of it broke him down. The fret of bootless repining smote Napoleon's body with disease incurable so that he died. Melbourne was made of fibre less tough. He had lived less in and by himself than greater men—more in the society and on the sympathy of others. He had not used power to realise whims and desires of his own, but rather to gratify or benefit his friends, his party, and his country. And now, when he could do so no longer, and day after day he missed the upward look in private and public that he had been accustomed to, and heard no more the familiar echo of his name at court or council, in parliament or press, and found the postman pass his door, and troops of devoted partisans forget to ask his opinion, there stole over him in spite of himself a sense of slow death, ineffable and irresistible. First he would not recognise the fact even to himself, and for a good while he strove not to let a trace of chagrin be detected in his air or tone by society. He could still be versatile and charming at table, still pleasant, satirical, or gossipping in *tête-à-tête*. But in the lengthening intervals of solitude the chilly gloom came back, ever chillier and gloomier.

> Then all was blank, and bleak, and grey,
> It was not night, it was not day,
> But vacancy absorbing space,
> And fixedness without a place.
> A silence and a stirless breath
> That neither was of life or death.
> A sea of stagnant idleness,
> Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless.

Books, old and new, but especially the former, he devoured insatiably as ever—with his eyes: but not as of yore, with intentness of scrutiny to get at what was in them, or, as he used to do more recently, with the desire of being amused by them. Buried in his easy-chair, he seemed to pore over the last volume of despatches, or the last translation from the Greek, or some revised tome of Patristic divinity; but he suspected when he sauntered forth into the air that a good deal of it had gone for nothing, his thoughts being far away.

His nervous system became thoroughly unstrung, and his hitherto unbroken physical strength gave way. Without any premonitory symptoms perceptible to those around him, on Sunday, the 23rd of October, he was suddenly attacked by illness, being for some hours almost insensible. His sister, who happened to be in town, was quickly summoned to his side by Lord Beauvale, who was staying with him at the time. When relieved by medical aid, he became painfully conscious of the benumbing sense of weakness which lingers after all other traces of paralytic seizure have disappeared. He continued steadily to improve, but for more than a fortnight was unable to leave his room. Palmerston wrote from Brocket that "he thought his progress towards convalescence very satisfactory;" * and when able to rejoin his guests at table, the congenial circle included Lady Holland, Mr. Milbank and his nephew Mr. W. Cowper. As he gradually revived he would sometimes try to talk unconcernedly of his illness, saying "it was only a runaway knock, but that he did not care to know the fellow who gave it." No one, however, who was familiar with his features could fail to observe how much he had aged in a short time.

In the session of 1843, Melbourne once more took his place as leader of Opposition, but his look and mien was sadly changed. The easy grace of movement and quiet play of humorous expression were observable no more. The traces

* Letter to Lord Lansdowne, from Brocket, November 13th, 1842.

of recent shock to his once powerful frame were not to be mistaken in the inelastic gait and worn features. Intimates who conversed with him on public business reported his sagacity to be still clear, and his judgment unimpaired. Yet he declined to speak, instinctively aware that the bow once so supple would not bend as it was wont to do, and sensitively afraid that the deterioration should appear. At the solemnities of Aberdeen and the whimsicalities of Brougham he would still laugh; and when the Duke of Wellington and Lyndhurst came at length to own that the principles of policy they had driven him from power for professing were legislatively indispensable to the preservation of order and of peace, the old fire flashed from his deep-set eye; and to use the phrase applied by Sheil to another noble nature in decline, "humour played harmlessly about his lips like summer lightning." The fearless love of right for its own sake, and the abounding readiness of sympathy and the comprehensive good-nature were still there, like finely proportioned arches of a stately pile: though dilapidation had begun, it was not yet overthrown.

Ministers were content with a resolution in the Commons expressing satisfaction at the settlement of the dispute respecting the boundary of Maine. In the Lords, Brougham would not be satisfied without a vote of personal compliment to Lord Ashburton for the ability with which he had executed his commission. For the noble envoy he cared little; but he had obligations of spite to the ex-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, which he was eager to discharge. He looked on Palmerston as one of those who, in the dark, had thrown a shell, at Melbourne's bidding, upon the heap, that excluded him from power; and to wreak his resentment for this life-long injury, all other recollections and considerations must give way. Palmerston no doubt concurred in the justice of his ostracism, or at all events in its necessity; but he had never come into collision with the "Banished Lord," as H. B. used to call him; and upon the great question of Slavery abolition they were probably more in accord than

any two other men of Cabinet rank in their day. It was in fact a common phrase among their contemporaries, that neither was quite accountable for his actions where the Black Man was concerned. Palmerston's vehemence, however, in denouncing the Ashburton Treaty, and his failure to induce any powerful section of politicians to take his view of it, was a temptation irresistible to the great libertine in mockery and vituperation. He disclaimed, of course, any personal ill-will, or even disrespect for his former colleague; but that did not prevent his pouring vial after vial of candid condemnation on his head, and then rubbing his reputation dry with raillery of the roughest texture. Next time they met Palmerston talked and laughed just the same as usual. That was his way.

In the course of the previous year agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws had gradually spread from the seats of manufacture to the seaports, and from Manchester to the metropolis. A series of influential meetings took place in Covent Garden Theatre during the following spring, and it was doubtful no longer how the balance of urban opinion inclined. On the other side were said to be arrayed in serried ranks all the weight and influence of the community that lived by land; owners in fee and rent chargers, mortgagees in possession and copyholders, tenants under lease and tenants at will; auditors of rents and farm-bailiffs, gardeners and day-labourers. The agricultural interest, one and indivisible, were said to hold out resolutely for the maintenance of protection as the girdle of their well-being. Wages would fall if the price of bread came down; and wages were too low already. Rents could not be reduced because of the fixed charges that had to be paid: and rents were hard enough to pay already. Costly improvements could not be attempted if owners and occupiers were bereft of the gains won in seasons of high prices; and instead of swamp and common being brought under the plough, vast tracts of light land heretofore tilled under the pressure of Act of Parliament, must go out of cultivation. All this was reiterated by most noble and

right honourable statesmen at Westminster and elsewhere, until a Free-Trade administration was turned out of office, and a Cabinet of Protectionists was installed in their room: and all this continued to be repeated day by day as part of the liturgy of county patriotism. Some great Whig proprietors like Lords Fitzwilliam and Spencer, the Duke of Bedford and Lord Radnor, raised their protest firmly against marshalling in antagonism the interests of country and town. They saw afar off and were sad at the humiliation in store for their order, and the needless suffering and apprehension that must be undergone by the tenant class in a struggle prolonged for party objects, which could only end in their desertion and discomfiture. But most of the counties had returned representatives pledged to keep up the price of bread by law; and so long as a community of nine millions, industrious and loyal in their habits, and having for their spokesmen the bulk of the nobility, gentry and clergy of the realm, presented an unbroken force of political and social resistance to legislative change, it was not easy to see how by peaceable means that change could be accomplished. The League might print tons of pamphlets on the logical sequence of steadier rents and higher wages from wider employment and cheaper bread; but the uneducated ploughman, and the half-educated farmer, and the ill-educated squire would not read a word of them though strewn on the causeway of every market town, and shed as thick as autumn leaves on every village green. No new cause has ever forced its way through the thorn hedges of social prejudice by the mere diffusion of useless, that is of unused, knowledge. The sympathetic voice of personal suasion is the music without which proselytism makes no way. Mechanical devices, especially those of the printing-press, are indeed marvellous and measureless in their power of repeating the echoes of truth; but for truth to be spoken so that it will reach the hearts of men, before all things it is necessary that it should be uttered in clear and audible voice by a true and a brave man. Such a man was Richard Cobden; and when it had

become evident that the towns were for free trade but that the counties were still claimed by its opponents, it seemed to him to be a duty indispensable and imperative to go, as he said, "unto the agricultural Gentiles." As a farmer's son, he could not be repelled as one ignorant of rural wants and difficulties; and none could listen to the thrilling earnestness and fearless sincerity of his appeals to the class from which he was sprung, without being sent home to think whether, after all, there could be any genuine security or true prosperity for the cultivators of the soil while their chief profits were felt to be so much lost by their fellow-countrymen.

How Hertfordshire happened to be the first county to whose people a public appeal was made may be told in a few words. Charles Higby Lattimore had for many years held the Place Farm on the Brocket Hall estate, as his father had done before him. Being a man of spirit and intelligence, superior to most of his class, he had in 1829 taken a separate farm from a neighbouring proprietor without a lease, but with an understanding, reduced to writing, that if he redeemed it from a neglected condition, and brought it into a state of more productive tilth, and then were served with notice to quit, after having made improvements which the subsequent crops had not sufficiently compensated him for, the property should be looked over by two efficient men of business, each party appointing one, and that they should decide what allowance should be made on that account. Notwithstanding this engagement, the rent was arbitrarily raised £70 a year; and because he refused to vote with theproprietor at the contested election of 1841, he was served with a notice to leave. Other occupiers had been dealt with similarly, and he believed that sympathy would be kindled, even though at first it blazed not high, were attention publicly called to the instability of the letting prices of land, and the uncertainty of its tenure, intensified if not wholly caused by the artificial system of protection. A deputation from the League invited the farmers to a public

meeting, on the 29th of April, 1843, in the town of Hertford, to discuss the question, of the Corn Laws, and after an address by Mr. Cobden, an animated debate arose which ended in a free trade resolution, moved by Mr. Lattimore, being adopted. This was an aggravation of the sin of territorial mutiny not to be forgiven, and the claim of compensation for permanent improvements which had increased the letting value of his farm seven shillings an acre was repudiated by the owner as not enforcible at law.*

In his seclusion the veteran politician took note of what was going on, and formed his own judgment, according to his wont, of men and things. Many of the doctrines promulgated on League platforms were little to his mind. He had not yet come to recognise as inevitable the total and immediate reversal of the policy which Canning and Goderich, Huskisson and Grey, Peel and Graham, had concurred in sanctioning, but he discerned the great change that was coming over the national mind, and occupied himself in pondering deeply and dispassionately the consequences that must ensue. In the personal controversy above referred to, he sympathised warmly with Mr. Lattimore, whom he knew to be the best of tenants, and with whom he spent many an hour in friendly talk regarding public affairs. To the end of his life that was his way; he loved to listen to the free and vigorous utterance of practical views upon any subject of importance, whether he agreed with them in all respects or not; and he relished peculiarly the firm but moderate tone of a man who, even when smarting under recent wrong, never forgot his consistency and self-respect. Far from deprecating Lattimore's desire publicly to vindicate the claim of tenant right, when asked whether certain adverse statements ought to be allowed to go uncontradicted, he asked to see the agreement about which

* 'A Plea for Tenant Right, addressed to the tenant farmers of Hertfordshire, showing the existing obstructions to an improved system of agriculture and the necessity of legal security for the capital of the occupiers of the soil.' By C. H. Lattimore.

the dispute had arisen and the correspondence to which it had led, and then said with emphasis, "On the contrary you owe it to yourself, and to your neighbours, who respect you, to vindicate the independence of your conduct and the justice of your claim." On the occasion of a visit to Place Farm,* when he was accompanied by Lord Beauvale, he said that he intended to reside for the future chiefly at Brocket, and that he wanted to know how he could do most good to the people about him. Mr. Lattimore replied "that as labour was then superabundant, especially in the autumn and winter, nothing would be more beneficial than giving employment to the women in the Park in weeding, &c., and to the men desiring work in trenching and planting at a fair rate of wages. This plan was adopted forthwith, as were other works of usefulness to the neighbourhood, to which he never failed to contribute liberally."

In November the Queen and the Prince Consort visited Sir Robert Peel at Drayton and the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, where many guests of distinction, including Melbourne, were assembled. By her Majesty's desire he soon afterwards spent some days at Windsor,† Lord and Lady Beauvale being invited at the same time. On leaving the Castle he proceeded to Broadlands, where he remained some days. At the end of January he returned to South Street, and announced his intention of taking part in the business of the session, his health being, as was hoped, much restored. He entertained several of his old friends at dinner, and his former spirits often revived in the congeniality of the company he liked. But except at Holland House and Carlton Gardens, he seldom dined out—perhaps from an unconfessed misgiving as to the permanence of his recovery; or because he found it easier to adhere to the regimen prescribed for him by Sir Henry Holland, without attracting observation: for his sensitiveness seemed to have concentrated all its defensive activity around the

* March 28th.

† From the 15th to the 18th of December.

point of weakness, any casual exposure of which pained him to the quick. He could not yet relinquish the hope of regaining some share of political power. It was far too late to think of turning to other pursuits. His zest for many things he had once enjoyed was gone; speculative inquiry no longer stirred his curiosity, and what once was pleasure no more pleased. The fire was gone out, as he said, when found gloomily alone, and unless he was summoned to take part in active business he should never feel warm again. But he knew that the probability of his being called upon depended on betraying no incapacitating weakness, even to those who had once hung upon his smile and still termed themselves inalienable friends. At best his party had been barely strong enough to hold their own, when his hand was firm and faith in his dexterity unshaken. Whatever they might affect to say to him, or one another, they never would come back to him, or ask him to join with them should the opportunity arise of endeavouring to regain power. But though relatives and intimates instinctively understood how to avoid nettling his susceptibility, mere acquaintances in thoughtless words, and political antagonists by inquisitive glances, kept the wound half-hidden green: and with all his habitual self-command, he was unable when he appeared in his place in the Lords to act the vigorous and unprompted part he had so long and until so lately filled without acting. He who had been the most provokingly easy-going of ministers when the burthen of empire was upon him, now that he had no burthen but his own to bear was perceptibly not at ease. When consulted he was as clear, when amused he laughed as heartily as ever; but he no longer challenged controversy or kindled merriment as he used to do. When left to himself he sank; and unconsciously betrayed his depression, when his opinion was not asked; he suspected neglect, said he was tired, and went away. The companion whose ever-active sympathy would have seen through all this, and with the tenderness of a woman watched to mitigate and soothe its pain, was no longer by his side; and though there were

many staunch and some discerning friends remaining, "there was no one left like Holland." Throughout the session he hardly spoke; and felt relieved when it was over.

Time with its many changes and vicissitudes had not indurated his nature, or rendered him unwilling to be reminded of early associations, of past pleasure rather than of pride. The writer of Brummel's Memoirs wrote asking his permission to publish the verses written by him when a young man about town in the Beau's album, and of which it may readily be believed he had no accurate remembrance. He did not ask to see a copy, but simply said that he could have no objection to the insertion of any poetry of his in the intended work which might add to its interest, provided it was not injurious to the feelings of others.

During the summer of 1843, agitation in Ireland, for the Repeal of the Union, which had slumbered for more than a decade, suddenly burst forth anew, in tones and with incidents that riveted the unwilling attention of politicians in and out of power. O'Connell, who had spent the previous year in the calm, discreet, and assiduous performance of the duties of Lord Mayor of Dublin, carried a resolution in the Town Council in favour of a domestic legislature; and, desiring to strengthen himself when next preferring the claim in Parliament, he suggested that the people of each county should meet in the open air and say if they were satisfied with the working of the Act of 1801. To his surprise and delight, instead of an ordinary response to his summons, he was everywhere met with demonstrations multitudinous and enthusiastic, characterised by a self-imposed discipline of sobriety and order so complete, that even with all his mature experience of popular emotion he was beguiled into believing that the prolonged silence of the Government indicated their intention, as in 1829, at the last moment to give way. He was summarily undeceived by the issue of a proclamation on the 6th of October forbidding a great assemblage near the capital, where those on

horseback were desired to muster and form, without arms, in cavalry order. Large masses of troops had been concentrated to enforce obedience to the Viceroy's interdict, and the congregating peasantry peaceably dispersed. O'Connell and six of his friends were arrested and held to bail on a charge of exciting sedition; the lawyers found occupation for many months in debating before the tribunals how far it was an offence at common law to seek to overawe the Government by peaceful manifestations of physical force: and the sanguine hope of seeing a parliament once more sitting in College Green silently withered away. Melbourne marked attentively the growth of the popular illusion, the abrupt measures by which it was dispelled, and the judicial scandals by which it was unsuccessfully attempted to revive the obsolete doctrines of constructive conspiracy. He thought the executive inexcusable in mutely suffering a credulous people to drift to the brink of abortive revolt, and then suddenly turning upon them with sabres drawn and cannon loaded. The peril over, he thought it a blunder of the kind that is worse than a crime, to try by oppressive prolixities of indictment, by specious straining of obscure maxims of law, and, above all, by resort to the jugglery of jury-packing, to amerce and imprison a man whom the popular mind on both sides of the Channel still regarded with admiration and sympathy. In the intervals of the Anaconda controversy, as it was called, the versatile tribune appeared at vast Anti-Corn Law gatherings in Manchester and London; and as he said himself, "He did not think he was ever better received in Patrick-shire." By the time his sentence was reversed on appeal to the House of Lords, the dazzling dream of dissolving the Union by dint of threatening eloquence and tremendous cheering had once more passed away. But the legal discomfiture of ministers was, upon the other hand, signal and complete; and the more thoughtful amongst them thenceforth began to cherish schemes for the unconfessed reconstruction of their Irish policy on a basis of religious concession. The Charitable Trusts Act secured

Catholic endowments and recognised Catholic dignities and titles, to the bitter grief of Exeter Hall; while the measure for the increased endowment of Maynooth filled the high places of No Popery with despair. The disintegration of Peelism had visibly set in; and regardless of remonstrance, warning, and gibe, the process was steadily pursued, sincerely but suicidally by its author.

A surplus of £1,400,000 was available on the revenue for the year ending the 5th of April, and Sir Robert Peel resolved to avail himself of the opportunity for reducing the duty on East India sugar. The West India interest took the alarm; and the hearts of other Protectionists among his followers misgave them as they observed one buttress after another of the system of preference and prohibition swept away. They resolved to support an amendment moved by Mr. Miles, which was carried by a majority of twenty in a full House on the 14th of June. Sir Robert Peel refused to bow to this decision, and summoning a meeting of his party, gave them to understand that if they did not approve of his policy and would not be led by his advice he was ready to resign. Eventually most of the seceders agreed to acquiesce in what had plainly become inevitable; for a change of Government would manifestedly have worsened rather than bettered their condition. On the 18th instant they consequently suffered the vote to be reversed, and from that day felt the knell of Protection had sounded.

The occasion was rendered memorable by the first words of open rebuke and reproach, in which Mr. Disraeli repudiated the leadership of Sir Robert Peel. For fifteen years no sounds of mutiny had publicly been heard in the Conservative camp, all personal jealousies and grievances being stifled by feelings of enmity, in common, to ascendant Liberalism. But with increased freedom of discussion, and a quickened sense of accountability to constituents, the old ways of administrative rule had gradually become impracticable. Mr. Pitt or Mr. Perceval at the head of a great majority had difficulties at Court or in Cabinet, when

about to take an unwelcome or unexpected course; but these "secret and confidential" thwartings overcome, the Minister had none of importance to fear from his followers. Even so late as 1828, when the long-opposed repeal of the Test Act was agreed to over-night by the Duke of Wellington's Cabinet, no serious complaint, far less any seceding menace, was heard from startled and sorrowing friends in Parliament. In the Peers, Lord Eldon groaned aloud and wept bitterly, but the ministerial majority in the Commons cared little for his prophecies of evil. Nor even did the subsequent concession of the Catholic Relief Bill, exceptionally trying as it was to the tenacity of party ties, convince those who planned and carried it that the disappointment or resentment it evoked was likely to be of any permanent significance. No signal opportunity occurred for putting to the proof the traditional amenability of supporters for several years; and relying on the wide margin of confidence which a majority of threescore and ten seemed to afford, Sir R. Peel made up his own mind, without troubling himself to make up the mind of his party, to abandon the system of colonial and agricultural protection, for sake of whose defence he had been brought into power. He had displaced his rivals for endeavouring to abate high preferential duties on sugar and corn, yet those on the former were now to be lessened materially, and those on the latter might to-morrow be given up. In the long-remembered sarcasm of his hitherto contemned but henceforth formidable censor, "He had caught the Whigs bathing, and had stolen their clothes." It would have been hard to grudge the valetudinarian of Brocket the amusement which this and like sallies of his early acquaintance afforded him; and when on subsequent occasions the daring leader of Conservative mutiny recalled the scenes in which Canning had been done to death on suspicion of compassing measures his destroyers soon afterwards actually carried, Melbourne rubbed his hands and laughed his old laugh again; and foreshortening his recollection of his strange talk with

Disraeli at Storey's Gate, exclaimed, "By Jove! I believe he'll do it after all."*

Palmerston, who intensely enjoyed the distrust which he saw had fallen upon the credulous and short-sighted Country Party that had rejected the Whig compromise of 1841, amused himself and the public by a leading article, little suspected to be from his pen, beginning with the parody,†

> We are all sliding, slid, slid, sliding,
> We are all sliding, sliding fast away.

Lord Spencer is known to have received about this time an intimation from the Duke of Bedford that he would do well to hold himself in readiness for a summons from the Queen, in case a change became necessary in administration.‡ He certainly believed in the possibility of his being sent for, and began to ruminate over old ties and pledges, the tenacity of which would save him from again being entangled in the perplexities of public affairs. To his brother Frederick he said that of course it would be his duty to attend the summons and submit his advice to the Queen; but his proposition for a new ministry could not be carried into effect, as he felt that he was bound in honour to offer the Chancellorship to Lord Brougham, if he chose to accept it. It is, however, certain that whatever the Duke may have thought, he had no authority to make the communication in question. Notwithstanding the impression that prevailed elsewhere of a coming change of ministry, it had not made its way at Court, and Lord Spencer's name was never presented to the Queen in the contingent capacity of First Minister.

Throughout his long and chequered life Melbourne had had his sorrows and his troubles. But the greatest of his trials was to come, in the sense of being neglected. Too

* See vol. i. p. 426.

† *Morning Chronicle.*

‡ Le Marchant's 'Life of Spencer,' p. 559, on authority of a memorandum found among the papers of the Hon. Richard Watson.

susceptible not to feel, and too proud to masquerade in gay looks when his soul was sad within him, he chafed daily at the indifference with which he was treated, not merely by the common herd of fashion, but by those who for years had compassed him round with blandishments of what he had taken for respect and attachment. For a time he tried to persuade himself that the numerous omissions to call were partly accidental. Some were sick, and some had gone abroad; some were time-servers and shabby dogs who had learned to trim, and were ashamed to look in the face their old patron: was he not better without them? But as weeks and months rolled on, and the bed of the once full stream of attention grew more and more dry, the hope of its ever returning again shrank within him. In the hey-day of success and power he would have laughed loudly and merrily at the notion of the world's being grateful. Still between genuine or abiding gratitude, and silent, stony, pitiless neglect there is a difference, and a wide one. He could not deceive himself in thinking that he was forgotten because the worldly, plausible, ambitious, and intriguing thought him no longer worth remembering, or recurring to for advice or aid. Still there must be many who seemed always to have valued him for his own sake, and whom he valued for theirs with an instinct of kindred strength and mutual assurance; where were they? Had they too forgotten what he was to them? or was he really that no longer? One who truly and unalterably loved him found him in the afternoon looking more than usually dejected. "I am glad," he exclaimed, "you are come. I have sat here watching that timepiece, and heard it strike four times without seeing the face of a human being; and had it struck the fifth I feel that I could not have borne it." Then after a little while the solace of gentle and wise companionship appeared to still the aching consciousness that had almost demented him; his equanimity returned, something like cheerfulness; and for the residue of that day he was content, and bright and calm again.

During his stay at Melbourne, his attention was directed to the singular change which had come over the minds of many of the clergy who a few years before had been loud in upbraiding him for showing respect, in Ireland, for the Catholic as well as the Protestant Church; yet who now disparaged the Reformed faith and sought reconciliation with Rome. He addressed a private letter on the subject to his old ally the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*, who, with every disposition to take any suggestion he might offer, found himself at fault from an unexpected cause. The first few lines of the letter were legible in the well-known hand, but those that followed were difficult to decipher, and of the latter half he could make nothing at all: unconscious infirmity was the too obvious cause; and it would have been therefore impossible to ask for an explanation from the invalid. Sir John Easthope took the letter to Palmerston, who, familiar with the handwriting, with his pencil underlined all the portions that were obscure, word for word. It thus remains a curious if not unique instance of an epistle on public affairs, indited by a Prime Minister that was, and rendered legible in interlineal copy by a Prime Minister that was to be:—

One of the principal topics which used to be made use of against my Government was that we were enemies of the Church of England, and friends and supporters of the Church of Rome. This topic was used very generally and with great vigour by the clergy throughout the country. Since that time a certain portion of the clergy have gone over openly to the Church of Rome, and have abandoned the Church of England altogether. I wish this conduct could be pointed out and commented upon with some force, as it ought to be, and if any speeches could be discovered made in this sense by any of the clergy who have since seceded from the Church, the pointing out of their inconsistency might add considerably to the pungency of these observations. I am staying here

until the 31st of this month. It is not likely that you will again leave London, but if you and Lady Easthope should roam this way I should be glad to see you here. The railroad would bring you to Derby, from whence we are distant seven or eight miles.*

During the autumn he seemed to regain his spirits. He took more exercise; received visitors at Brocket, and was once more the delight of the familiar circle assembled at Panshanger.

At a public dinner which with difficulty he had been persuaded to attend, he made a speech which he meant to serve as an indication of his views of public affairs. The aspect of the country was at the moment highly prosperous. The flush of speculation was in its cheek, and the pulse of industry was quickened by enormous expenditure in the construction of railways and other joint-stock undertakings. Although the Corn Laws had not been repealed, peace and plenty reigned, owing confessedly to the further adoption by Sir R. Peel of the principles of free trade. The attempt to govern Ireland by repression had broken down and been abandoned, and measures of conciliation pointing towards religious equality had been substituted in its stead, with a visible abatement of threatening agitation. He might well exult in the adoption by his supplanter of the policy for which he had been driven from power. In the memorable words of Mr. Disraeli, "Protection was now in the same perilous position a Protestant ascendency had been fifteen years before."

His agricultural hearers cheered his good-humoured taunts; and he was sufficiently pleased with himself to look with curiosity for the report in the morning papers. There was a time when he cared for none of these things; but the misgiving had begun to haunt him that the world no longer cared as much as it used to do for what he said or thought. But four short years ago he was First Minister

* To Sir John Easthope, October 13th, 1845.

of England; treated with unbounded confidence by his sovereign; his name a toast at festive gatherings, and a rallying cry at election meetings; by allies and by adversaries the observed of all observers; and if not solaced by domestic joy, consoled by "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." It was natural perhaps that he should be less and less an object of attention, political and personal, when out of office and when out of health; and, never having had the art of contriving or the knack of seizing opportunities for display, it was not perhaps strange that by paragraph-writers he should seem to be forgotten. It was not a pleasant sensation, not one he would confess. But every now and then it came, and went, and came again. He had been ill, they said; but he was not ill now; he had grown careful and would not be ill. People should hear of him once more. Bitter was his vexation at finding a careless summary in the daily papers of what he had said, some points blunted and the rest left out. He happened to be in town, two or three days afterwards. An intimate friend who had noticed his annoyance mentioned it casually to the editor of a leading journal, who offered to repair the error by publishing a correct report if he could obtain it. He received some pages the next morning from the ex-Premier; but in a hand hardly recognisable, and which he was unable to decipher. In his perplexity he took the manuscript to Palmerston, who owned himself at fault in many passages. He asked the never-failing aid of her to whom a brother's reputation was most dear. She looked at the writing for a moment and burst into tears. "Could you," exclaimed Palmerston, "take it down in shorthand if he could be got to repeat it?" "Certainly," was the reply. "Then let us try." They drove to South Street, and found Melbourne going to dinner alone. He insisted that his visitors should stay and dine; and after much talk in his old abrupt and fitful way, he consented to repeat the contents of the illegible scrawl, expressing himself obliged and gratified. On every subject that he touched during the interview his mind seemed to be as clear and

active as it had ever been; and as though utterly unconscious of the too visible marks of physical infirmity, he spoke more than once like a man who did not think he had done with public life. He could surmise as little as the rest of the world how near was the ministerial change then actually impending, but his editorial guest as he left him, felt with pain that he dreamed of being a minister again.

The failure of the harvest, and especially of the potato crop in Ireland, compelled the Cabinet in November to consider the necessity of opening the ports by Order in Council; but Sir R. Peel failed to obtain a concurrence in his view that, once adopted freedom of trade in food should be made permanent by law. Prices continued to rise; apprehensions of famine increased; and Ministers separated without any announcement of what was to be done. Lord Ashley told his constituents in Dorsetshire that the Corn Laws were doomed; Lord Morpeth sent in his adhesion to the League; and Lord J. Russell wrote from Edinburgh publicly renouncing his advocacy of a fixed duty, and declaring his conviction that the time had come for entire abolition of a system which had proved to be "the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture and the cause of want and crime." The Cabinet reassembled. Lords Wharncliffe and Stanley were still obdurate; on the 4th of December the *Times* announced that the abolition of the Corn Laws had been resolved on by the Premier, and on the 7th he resigned. With the promise of his support on the question, Lord John undertook to form an administration; and after conference with his former colleagues he believed he had succeeded, when Lord Grey refused to serve with Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. Sir R. Peel was consequently recalled. The vacancies caused by the sudden death of Lord Wharncliffe, and the withdrawal of Lord Stanley, were filled by the nomination of the Duke of Buccleuch as President of the Council, and Mr. Gladstone as Colonial Secretary of State: and the forecast of Lord Aberdeen, on which the *Times* relied, was redeemed in the ensuing session. The Whigs

had to wait a few months longer before they returned to office; but for him who had been so long their chief there was thenceforth no more room for cherishing illusions. Melbourne was not invited to take part in any of the conferences in December, ostensibly on the ground of temporary illness, but in reality because it was felt that he was permanently too debilitated to be asked to undertake high office in the critical condition of affairs. He was not himself of that opinion, and thought he should have been offered the Privy Seal. To more than one of his old associates in power his omission was a source of unaffected sorrow; the more so inasmuch as they could not be unconscious of the effect that it was sure to have upon his failing health and spirits.

In an unpublished sketch by Charles Greville, he is described as quoting with obvious application to himself, the well-known lines from Milton's 'Agonistes'—

> So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
> My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
> In all her functions weary of herself.
> My race of glory run, *not* race of shame,
> And I shall shortly be with those that rest.

In public controversy he took no further part; but his vote on all occasions of importance continued to be given with those of his old friends. He was gratified by the appointment of Lord Besborough to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, and by Palmerston's reinstatement as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Without affecting acquiescence in his own exclusion from the Russell Cabinet, he disdained complaint or cavil; and was ready when asked, as he was not unfrequently by its chief, to afford the benefit of his experience and advice. And so the sun went down slowly and cloudily, and few seemed to notice when it actually disappeared.

Reading still constituted the chief consolation of his solitude, and men of letters, to many of whom his reputation as a scholar was well known, sought to engage his attention

and sympathy. Leigh Hunt sent him a copy of his stories from the Italian Poets which he asked him to present to the Queen. The following was his reply:—

Sir, Brocket Hall, October 14, 1846.

Looking at your last letters and your last publication this morning puts me in mind that I have to beg your pardon for not having noticed many of your former communications. If you will send me another copy of your extracts from the Italian Poets, I will take an opportunity of presenting it to Her Majesty. With respect to your work upon wit and humour I have some doubts, I confess, because, though there is nothing in it to which the most absurd fastidiousness can make any real objection, there are necessarily, from the nature of the subject, some passages in it the laying of which immediately under Her Majesty's eyes might be liable to misrepresentation. You will not wonder that I am rather unnerved when you recollect that your brothers of the press have severely censured me for recommending Dr. Arnold's sermons for Her Majesty's perusal, and you know also that I was much attacked by the *Times*, because it appeared upon the trial with Norton that I had advised Mrs. Norton to read Dr. Lardner's observations upon the Jewish errors with respect to the conversion of Mary Magdalen.

With respect to the latter part of your note it is my opinion that a pension would be well bestowed if conferred upon you, but you will not be surprised when I add that I have determined not to interfere in any matters of this nature.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

Melbourne.

He retained his old liking for Campbell, and dined with him in the spring of 1847, with a numerous party which included Lord Russell, Lord Derby, and his old antagonists Brougham

and Lyndhurst. In social intercourse he seemed to take undimmed delight. One morning about the middle of October, Mr. Lattimore called and found Lord Melbourne engaged in writing. "Take the newspaper until I have finished my despatch." It took some time, and when completed he told him what it was about :—

> Lord Lansdowne and Lord John have written to ask my opinion about giving power to the Bank to extend its issues beyond the limits prescribed by the Act. Consols are down to 81¾, and general panic prevails in the City. They want to know my opinion if it would be safe. What do you say?

The friend of Cobden without hesitation replied "Perfectly safe: it must be done." He seemed pleased, and said that was his own opinion; and that he had told them so. Two days after the letter of the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer authorizing the Directors to disregard the Act of 1844 appeared in the *Times*, and the impending ruin was averted. Melbourne said he thought assistance might have been given sooner to some of the great houses that were known to be in jeopardy, and who might thus have been saved. But he admitted all the difficulties of such a method of proceeding, and cast no blame upon his old colleagues for the course they had pursued.

In November the Duke of Bedford, Mr. W. Cowper and Lord Beauvale stayed some days at Brocket. Lord Jocelyn, who had held office in the preceding Government, and had remained attached to its chief after its fall, was also of the party; and on seeing Mr. Lattimore, who had called to inquire for the invalid, took him aside and said he had a message for him from Sir Robert Peel, with instructions not to deliver it in Lord Melbourne's presence. Next day he rode over to Wheathampstead. The Duke said he would have accompanied him, but that he was unwilling to leave his friend, whom he thought fast declining, and feared he might never have an opportunity of visiting again. Sir Robert's message

was to express a desire to renew his correspondence with Mr. Lattimore upon agricultural subjects, having received much valuable information in former communications, and intimating his regret that he had not made his personal acquaintance at an earlier period.

During the short winter session Lord Cottenham fell ill; and there being no prospect of his recovering sufficiently to resume his public duties, the question arose who should be Chancellor. To tantalising inquiries whether he still had hopes, Brougham said were he now to take the Great Seal his first act would be to issue a commission of lunacy against himself. What good would the possession of that trinket do him now? He had no child left whom increase of rank and state could gratify or serve; and at the thought his tears flowed freely. Softened by affectionate memories, he declared that he had not meant to quarrel with the Whigs, and that "had Melbourne only treated him with more consideration, they never need have quarrelled." For all this it was not in the nature of the man to rest quiet when he knew that the Woolsack was about to be vacated, and that half his political acquaintances were busy with speculation as to how it should be filled. Many of the Government wished for the elevation of Baron Rolfe; others for the promotion of Sir T. Wilde; and Campbell was in favour of himself. The Premier went to consult Melbourne, who told him Brougham called on him likewise to talk it over, and was told that "he must lay his account with seeing Jack Campbell Chancellor;" at which he waxed furious, said that it would disgust the Equity bar, and for himself, he would never sit in the House of Lords with such a Chancellor. All this was narrated soon afterwards at Brooks's to Campbell by Edward Ellice, who professed himself to be one of his supporters in the struggle. Lord Cottenham rallied, and the contention was adjourned for a few months more.

Melbourne's last vote* in Parliament was given, as his first had been, in favour of religious liberty. Unable to endure

* May 25th, 1848.

the fatigue of a long debate on the Bill for the removal of Jewish Disabilities he left his proxy in its favour with Lord Lansdowne; thus fitly ending a legislative life of more than forty years, by recording his unwavering conviction that for conscience sake no man should be suspected of unpatriotism by the law. Attendance in the House of Lords had grown irksome to him, and during the remainder of the session he but seldom appeared in his place. The state of affairs abroad and at home was not calculated to revive his waning interest in the contention of party; yet he still loved to hear what was going on from Palmerston and Spring Rice, Hobhouse and Ellice, when they called; and he would not unfrequently spend an hour or two at the house of the Misses Berry, where many of his old friends best worth meeting were certain to drop in.

Before the close of the session, the proceedings of the Young Ireland party led to a temporary suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. After a vain attempt at insurrection, Mr. Smith O'Brien and his ill-advised associates were arrested, and a few weeks later brought to trial upon a charge of treason. To the surprise and vexation of Melbourne, he learned from the newspapers that his name was inconsiderately and unwarrantably introduced at the trial as having sanctioned in 1832 a supposed attempt to debauch certain officers of the army with a view by menaces of force to secure the passing of the Reform Bill. Sir William Napier, who in 1832 held a command in the central counties, was called as a witness for the defence to prove that a communication had been addressed to him with regard to placing himself at the head of an insurgent array, organised by the Birmingham League, and who were supposed to be in readiness to march on London for the purpose of overawing the House of Lords. The letter, he said, was dated from H. O., 25th June, 1832; was signed with the initials T. Y.; was closed with the official seal, and was franked by Melbourne. Chief Justice Blackburn overruled the question as to the contents or purport on the ground

that it was not evidence. Never having been published, it could not be treated as history; and having been written sixteen years before by a person having no connection with the parties accused, to an individual who was a stranger to their acts and motives, it was plainly irrelevant to the pending issue. But a copy having been furnished to counsel it appeared *in extenso* next day in the *Freeman's Journal*, and naturally attracted no ordinary degree of attention.

MY DEAR NAPIER, H. O., June 25, '32.

Sir H. Bunbury told me of your wise determination not to become "a parliament man," at least for the present. The offer was very tempting, and you have the more merit in declining. I refrained from writing to you while the matter was undecided, for I did not wish to obtrude my opinion, but I felt that reason was against your acceptance, as your health, your purse, and your comfort would all have suffered by your attendance in the House of Commons. The history must have been laid aside. You could not, moreover, have been a calm and silent member, but would have been exerting yourself to push onward the movement faster than it probably will march, or than, perhaps, all things considered, it is desirable that it should march. Let us go back a moment. The display of energy, and a readiness to act on the part of the people when the Duke of W—— was on the eve of coming in, was greater far than I expected. I speak not of the Cockneys, but of the men in the North—Glasgow, Newcastle, Birmingham. Are you aware that, in the event of a fight, you were to be invited to take the command at Birmingham? Parkes got a frank from me for you with that view, but had no occasion to send it. Had he written, I should have fired a despatch at you with my friendly and anxious counsel, and entreaty to keep you quiet and not to stir from Freshford. It is not well to enter early into revolutions—the first fall victims. What do you think would have

happened? The Reformers (Place, &c.) talked big to me, and felt assured of success. The run upon the Banks and the barricading of the populous country towns would have brought matters to a crisis, and a week they—the Reformers—thought would have finished the business. They meant so to agitate here that no soldiers could have been spared from London, and the army is too small elsewhere to have put down the rebels. In Scotland, I believe, the most effectual blow would have been struck, and it seemed difficult to have resisted the popular movement. The Tories, however, say the Duke would have won. No doubt the discipline under which soldiers live might have proved a stronger element than the public enthusiasm, *i.e.* unless the latter was universal or extensive, and then it would have carried all before it. The task would have been to bring back society to its former quiet state! Thank God we have been spared the trial; but, as a matter of speculation, tell me what you think would have been the result? Am I right in my conjecture that you would have refused the Birmingham invite, and kept your sword in its scabbard? Yours ever truly,

T. Y.

The topic was a godsend to the comic writers; Thackeray could not repress his laughter, knowing as he did the man and his fussy absurdity. He broke forth in *Punch*:—"Young's Night Thoughts—I wish I had never franked that letter." Parkes took the wit aside, at the Reform Club, and endeavoured to explain to him the serious harm it would do the party if public attention were kept alive on the subject. Thackeray, to hide his sense of amusement, looked over his head at an angle of forty-five degrees, as was his wont in such emergencies, and suffered the remonstrant to reiterate with cumulative emphasis, "You ought not, really you ought not, I say you ought not to compromise a man like Melbourne, with the Court, in this way." The mountain heaved from side to side with suppressed mirth, ending in an explosion of laughter, overwhelming all the small fences and

palings of party propriety. Young was summoned to Brocket to give an account of himself. Justification being impossible, he tried to extenuate his inconceivable folly by recounting how everybody he had met in town blamed Napier for the disclosure, and laughed at the idea of any one supposing that the Home Secretary of 1832 would have harboured the idea of tampering with the loyalty of any man. The valetudinarian listened moodily to the voluble tissue of unavailing excuses. He was vexed with himself for having committed the mistake of ever trusting such a man with the privilege of using his official seal and franking letters in his name. He was not, however, seriously troubled with the notion that any one who had the least knowledge of his character and conduct would give heed to the reckless attempt to impute to him any cognisance "of the written chatter of that blockhead." The public press, without distinction of party, treated the matter generally with ridicule.

Early in November his old malady showed symptoms of returning; and the consciousness that it lay in ambush for him prostrated his remaining power to ward off attack. At last it came, and though life was for a few days prolonged, his mental activity awoke no more. The public were first apprised of his condition by the following announcement:—

> It is feared that Lord Melbourne is dying. At one time the family at Brocket did not expect, on Thursday, that he would live through the day. On Friday he rallied; on Saturday morning he still continued rather better. Since then the noble Lord has remained in much the same state. In answer to inquiries this day at noon, we hear that up to the latest accounts received from Brocket no material change has occurred in his condition.*

For two days more he lingered, gradually losing consciousness,

* *Morning Chronicle*, November 22nd, 1848.

and apparently the sense of pain; medical aid and tender care were unavailing. At length his hour was come, and after threescore years and ten he passed away with no other utterance than a long-drawn sigh.*

Among those who followed his remains to their last resting-place were Lords Cowper, Palmerston, De Mauley, Ebrington, and Ashley, Hon. W. and S. Cowper, Hon. C. Howard and Sir Thomas Birch.

* November 24th, 1848.

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